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STRENGTH—FOR PEACE OR WAR?

SPEAKING last week with enthusiasm about recent economic and political progress in Western Europe, Mr. Bevin said that he had no "quarrel at all with the Communist system in Russia." But if he did not interfere in the Soviet Union, then the Russians must also forbear to interfere with our liberty in Britain. Mr. Bevin is not given to exact definition in his public utterances, but we may assume that, as a realist, he was in these words repeating his former expressions of a "live-and-let-live" philosophy. It involves the acceptance by the West of a Soviet sphere of influence beyond Russia's frontiers, in exchange for Russia's recognition of Western spheres, in which interference by Moscow cannot be tolerated.

Two difficulties are at once raised by this common-sense view. The first is that there are large border areas which cannot be accounted either Eastern or Western because in them strategic and economic interests continually clash. Secondly, when Mr. Bevin talks of expecting Russia not to interfere, he must, if he is serious, cease to confuse, as he did once again in this speech, the activities of British Communists with direct Soviet intervention. It is a trick of politicians to talk of Russian "aggression" in any country where Communism is active. Often this is merely an alarmist and dangerous way of saying that Communist parties take their tactical cue from Moscow's wireless utterances. As for interference by spies, it is well to say, honestly, that all Great Powers maintain an espionage apparatus. A "live-and-let-live" policy involves recognising these practices as normal. It cannot involve the abolition of propaganda from Moscow any more than it can involve demanding that America ceases to broadcast and propagate her belief in free enterprise and in the American way of life.

Once this is understood, an agreement of sorts, even if it is only an agreement to differ, seems possible between East and West. It may be no more than a truce, but a truce is much in a world heading for war. During the period of truce a more lasting basis of agreement may be sought. We are glad to deduce from his speeches that Mr. Bevin has in mind some such agreement; only on the basis that they lead towards peace can he defend Western Union, the Atlantic Pact and the proposed creation of a Pacific regional unity. The danger of all such alliances to counteract the growing power of Communism is that they may become in people's minds merely preliminaries to an inevitable war.

If, for instance, the United States Government were to seek, as some Americans do, to dry up the flow of the trade between Western and Eastern Europe, then Europe would gain nothing of value from the Marshall Plan, which ostensibly aims at enabling Western Europe to become independent by 1952. In the same way, the proposal made in the United States that Britain should be turned into an arsenal, receiving its food and raw material in compensation for losing its export trade, would be fatal. On that basis, Britain and Western Europe would merely become bases for American military operations. Similarly, there is a risk that as the West feels itself safer, because better armed—probably a delusion in the circumstances—it will be less and less inclined for discussion with Moscow. It was disturbing that, when Stalin put forward proposals for peace discussions, their sincerity was not tested by positive proposals from the West. Britain and America replied with absurd talk about a "peace offensive." If all peace feelers from the East are to be treated as mere propaganda, and all peace suggestions from the West scouted as appeasement, what, except war, is left? We may easily reach the point in which America and Russia, both of them conscious that war, though devastating, is not, from their point of view, final, will cease to look for any form of peaceful settlement and accept as inevitable a future in which Europe is expendable and Communism and Capitalism fight the "last fight" to a finish. The result, as the original Communist Manifesto declared, might be "the common ruin of both the contending classes."

We have not reached the point at which mankind is doomed. America is rearming, but her economy is not yet irrevocably geared to war. The danger of a slump is being met by Marshall Aid as well as by rearmament. It is still possible, given a *détente*, for the balance of Federal expenditure to switch gradually away from armaments and towards economic aid. Moreover, the minds of Americans are still far from made up. There is no united, monolithic America preparing for war. There are a variety of different trends, militant and pacific. One of the difficulties, indeed, is that anti-Communist propaganda has constantly to be stimulated by the American Press and radio in order to overcome the traditional anti-Imperialism of Americans and the American businessman's detestation of high taxation.

Similarly, there is good reason to believe that the Soviet Union, which suffered more than any other country in the world in the last war, is desperately anxious to avoid war if that can be achieved without the surrender of positions it regards as vital. That a conflict continues within the Politburo may be indicated by the recent changes of personnel, and is suggested by the fact that Professor Varga, well known as one of Stalin's close economic advisors, is able, in spite of violent attacks in the Soviet Press, to defend his thesis that, in England at least, capitalism has been weakened by the war and that the workers may achieve Socialism without violence. If the moderates prevail in Washington, and the Politburo listens to the sane analysis of Varga, the basis exists for one-half of the world to talk with the other.

Britain as the leading Power in Western Europe has, therefore, a peculiar responsibility. It is not true that our economic dependence on the United States deprives us of all will and initiative. We need not rebuild the military power of the Ruhr and allow its industries to be reconstructed by the same type of tycoon who supported Hitler, merely because the United States prefers private to public enterprise. We need not agree to become an advance base and arsenal for the United States, and allow American interests to force us to reverse the policy of buying as much of our food as possible in Eastern Europe and increasing our trade with non-dollar countries. Nor, finally, need we fall into a fatalist apathy. Our chance of survival depends on our insistence, before it is too late, that the West should put forward a positive and realistic demand for a world truce.

Tension at Akaba

The arrival of a small Israeli force at the head of the Gulf of Akaba seems unlikely to ease Dr. Bunche's difficult task in the Israeli-Transjordan armistice negotiations at Rhodes; but there is little substance in the charges broadcast from Amman that the Israelis have perpetrated a "flagrant breach" of the Palestine truce. An outlet to the sea on the Southern Negeb was definitely assigned to Israel by the United Nations; and, though the Israeli-Egyptian armistice provided that only defensive troops should be retained by Israel in the Western Negeb, there is no evidence that the detachment which has reached the sea at Um Rashrash violated Egyptian territory or that any offensive operations across the Transjordan frontier have been carried out or are intended. The armoured reinforcements which the British Government has dispatched to the Transjordan village of Akaba are meant presumably to ensure that no light-hearted expansion of the occupied coastal strip is carried out by the Israelis. Their arrival, however, is likely to increase suspicions in Tel Aviv that Britain is not prepared, if she can help it, to acquiesce in a settlement under which a strip of Israeli territory interrupts land communication between the Canal Zone and Transjordan. The next step may be the revival at Rhodes of King Abdullah's demand for a corridor between Akaba and Egyptian soil. All the complications of an Arabian Danzig seem to be arising at the Southern end of the Negeb.

Siam Terror

The melodramatic quality of Siamese politics should not be allowed to obscure the reality of political terrorism. A week ago, four men were shot and the ominous phrase was used that they were trying to escape. The Deputy Chief of Police in Bangkok has little to learn about terrorism, either in technique or in official phraseology. The four murdered men were all key people in the Siamese Resistance to the Japanese; they played an important role in assisting the forces sent in to Siam by S.E.A.C. They were all supporters of Pridi. Two of them were members of his defence counsel in the fantastic trial which stumbles along from bogus evidence to unabashed political propaganda. After two and a half years, the mystery of King Ananda Mahidol's death remains unsolved. Solution is highly improbable as long as it can provide a weapon of propaganda against Pridi and against anyone who has at any time shown a progressive outlook in home or in foreign affairs. Their number is now being reduced by the methods of the gunman, and at least eight of them have been assassinated recently "whilst trying to escape." In Siam itself, there is little public opinion, but Pibun, the present dictator and a warm supporter of the Japanese during the war, is now angling for Western support. Whilst so many Notes are being written to Bulgaria, Hungary and other countries found guilty of insufficient liberty, it would not seem inappropriate to extend the diplomatic correspondence to Piban.

Abortive Agreement

Nine months of negotiations between Bao Dai and the French have produced a still-born agreement in the form of an exchange of letters between the ex-Emperor of Annam and the President of France. This agreement would represent a very substantial advance in French views if it did not ignore the hard fact that Ho Chi Minh is the effective and popular President of the Viet Nam Republic and that Bao Dai represents no one but himself. It is proposed that Viet Nam should be independent within the French Union; that it should have its own Vietnamese Army, legal system and finances as well as the right to send its own diplomatic representatives to Asian countries and to the Vatican. For themselves the French demand the right to maintain military and naval bases and to maintain respect for their economic and cultural interests in Viet Nam. Further, after a four days' debate, the French Chamber has just given a second reading to a Bill setting up a territorial assembly in Cochin China. Such an Assembly (which, by virtue of the situation, could only be a gathering of puppets) will decide whether or not Cochin China is to be attached to Viet Nam. All this remains talk, as long as President Ho Chi Minh still holds the loyalty of the Vietnamese people. Even Bao Dai's own family recently stated that they strongly disapprove his efforts to convince public opinion that he enjoys the confidence of the Viet-Nam people, and that no peaceful solution can be found in this "forgotten war" except by negotiations with Ho Chi Minh. The French Minister for Overseas Territories exposed the unreality of the agreement by stating, on the eve of Bao Dai's proposed return to Indo-China on April 25th, that his Government must pursue its military action in Indo-China!

Groundnuts

Mr. Strachey was wise to admit frankly to Parliament that the history of his Groundnut Empire in the East African Bush has been far from one of unqualified success. It is obvious, as he tacitly admitted, that the experts who originally surveyed the area were over-optimistic, and that difficulties which might have been, but were not foreseen, have upset the planned programme. Indeed, pressing though the need for oil seeds was and is, the Minister did not dispose completely of the criticism that the scheme was rushed, without due account being taken of inadequate communications, housing problems or the need for specially adapted tractors. As it is, the estimated crop of 600,000 tons of groundnuts is most unlikely to be achieved by 1950-1; and the capital investment will probably be twice or thrice the £25 millions originally forecast. Nevertheless, the case for going on with the project is overwhelming. Even though the costs of production may have been underestimated—partly through miscalculation of the wage rates which a public corporation would have to pay for native labour—the world shortage of oils and fats shows no signs of diminishing, and current prices for groundnuts are treble those on which the scheme was originally based. The decision to restrict the ground cleared to 2,000,000 instead of 3,500,000 acres, and to concentrate mainly on the development of the southern area (which should be reached this quarter by the new railway from Mikindani) seems sound.

Clothes Derationed

The only real risk attendant on Mr. Wilson's decision to end completely the clothes rationing system is that large-scale buying by hotels and boarding houses may lead, at least temporarily, to a shortage of supplies of household linen in the shops. For the rest, the result of making most woollen goods coupon-free had demonstrated that, at current price levels, rationing by the purse is sufficiently effective; there seems to be no likelihood of complete derationing being followed by a rush to buy. In these circumstances, to prolong a rationing system whose operation required a staff of 10,000 would have been quite unjustified. We trust, however, that the Board of Trade will live up to Mr. Wilson's promise that prices will be closely watched and that the proportion of Utility clothing, which was allowed to fall last year, will be raised. It is true that the lifting of all restrictions on purchases of clothes has been made possible by the success of "disinflation" and, incidentally, by the public's insistence on indulging in smoking regardless of price; but we have a suspicion that in a number of cases the retail price of clothes is higher than it need be. Certainly Mr. Wilson will have every justification in freezing prices if there is any sign of traders, who have been selling below the maximum, raising their prices.

International Trade Unionism

The International Trade Secretariats—that is, the Trade Union Internationals of transport workers, textile workers, and so on—last week decided to form a loose consultative organisation of their own, now that the W.F.T.U. can no longer serve as a rallying point for the trade unions of the West. The Secretariats deny that they are attempting to form a rival International, and limit their ambitions to a consultative body which can handle some of their relations with the I.L.O. and the various agencies of the United Nations. Even so, the Miners' International, which is one of the most important, is apparently unwilling to join in the new move, presumably because it is afraid that it may lead to a further rupture between East and West. The Secretariats still include a number of unions from the other side of the Iron Curtain, and serve as the only link between the two ideologically split trade union groups. How long they will be able to hold together on this basis no one knows; their fate will depend largely on the policy followed by the W.F.T.U. now that the Western group is no longer a part of it. If the Secretariats, which are much less involved in political issues, can remain united, so much the better; but they are dominated by the Western movements, and it seems doubtful whether Moscow will be prepared to "play" on these terms. Only the International Co-operative Alliance, representing many shades of opinion, still maintains an unbroken front.

The T.U.C. and the Trades Councils

The T.U.C. General Council, in pursuance of its campaign against Communist influence, has now announced a renewed purge of the Trades Councils, which are its local counterparts, uniting the trade union branches in each town or area. The General Council has, in the last resort, no control over the Trades Councils, if they choose to defy it: all it can do is to withdraw recognition from any particular Council that it regards as acting under Communist influence. Such withdrawal would mean that the Councils affected would no longer be helped by the T.U.C., or used as its local agents, or represented at the Trades Councils Conference. What happened further would depend on the Council's ability to keep their affiliations in defiance of the General Council's ban, and this, in turn, would depend partly on the constitutions of the various national Unions. Some Unions, having centralised funds, pay their branches' contribution to the Trades Councils, whereas in others these are paid out of local funds under branch control. During the previous period in which the General Council attempted to discipline the Trades Councils by means of the "Black Circular," its action was effective in some areas but not in others; and the ban was given up during the war, when the Communists had become ardent supporters of the Allied cause. Its revival now is a sign of the increased tension due to the change in Communist policy since the adoption of the Marshall Plan; and once again the big stick is likely to be used with caution, and only when a particular Trades Council gives very strong reasons for offence.

Roads Across Frontiers

There is still one United Nations agency which in spite of the cold war still functions across the Iron Curtain—the Economic Commission for Europe which is based on Geneva, still includes the Russians and, on the economic and trading level, has kept the routes open for a substantial volume of work. It has now completed its plans for an international network of "super-highways." Direct motor roads from Helsinki to Marseilles, from Edinburgh to the tip of Sicily and from Paris to Warsaw are among the trunk routes. Two Alpine road-tunnels—Mont Blanc and St. Bernard—are under discussion; one will be selected. The Channel Tunnel is not included. One proposal is that Italy, with its pent-up emigrants, might provide navvy legions. If such a scheme were pressed to active construction it would be the vital first step towards the "functional forces" of international understanding.

PARLIAMENT: Cries of "Demagogue"

Wednesday

POLITICIANS like publicity, and are as jealous of each other's notices as ballerinas. They feel no chagrin more deeply than to see their rivals' virtue acknowledged. Nothing irks some of them more than a popular action by their opponents or colleagues. Demagogy they define as "other peoples' speeches."

This was apparent when Harold Wilson announced the end of clothes rationing. The Tories, instead of showing pleasure and relief at this nationally welcome measure, fell into a convulsion of jeering. Hinchingbrooke affected to clap hands; others called out "Sowerby." Oliver Stanley turned and quietened his back-benchers, fearing no doubt that their envy of Wilson's beneficent decision might be interpreted in the country as a lack of cordiality towards his measure. Labour Members cheered, although one or two raised inconvenient doubts about money still being rationed.

On Tuesday, the charge of publicity hunting was raised against Thorneycroft by the Minister of Health. After questions, he made a restrained statement on analgesia. He appreciated the sincerity of the speeches during the recent debate, but they were based on a misconception. He already had duties under the National Health Act to make analgesia available as far as possible, and he regretted that he couldn't accept Thorneycroft's Bill owing to circumstances within his control.

Thorneycroft thanked him for his courtesy, and went on to ask him "three short questions" totalling over eight hundred words. This seemed irregular to Labour Members, since it is not customary to have a debate after a Ministerial statement. Thorneycroft glided through his questions, fanned on by Labour blasts of "Speech!" Stephen Taylor, the *Daily Herald's* medical correspondent, rose on a point of order to protest. "Stooge!" shouted the Tories. And still Thorneycroft spoke.

From this point onwards, good humour ended. The Opposition front bench didn't like the idea of a Minister making a statement in isolation which referred to a Bill in progress. Stanley complained. The Minister became angry. He accused Thorneycroft of publicity hunting and of exploiting pain as a political stunt. This raised a louder, longer snarl than anything previously heard in the House.

The Tories shouted "Shame!" Walter Elliot, looking very grave, called on the Minister to withdraw. But Bevan, who was thinking of the merits of his case, tucked his jaw in and didn't move, not even when Thorneycroft, with a martyred air, forgave him and left the matter for the country to judge.

The drama of Ministerial statements tended to distract interest from Strachey's stirring speech on the ground-nuts scheme. He expected to be attacked for the high cost of East African development for "business reasons"; and he answered the Tory case with economic arguments. But it was curious to hear the Tories argue against bold enterprise, and call for a halt because the project had met difficulties.

Listening to Crookshank and Hudson, it would have been easy to believe that business men are the sovereign specific against every trouble, that they never make losses and never go bankrupt.

Crookshank, opening for the Tories, made the ungenerous suggestion that the Government only wanted oils and fats in order to increase the ration before the next General Election. Peering over his spectacles, mumbling saws and reprimands, you could almost hear the knitting-needles clicking as Crookshank established his claim to be grandmother of the House. Hudson seems much more formidable. With his sombre air, his suggestion of having some terrible knowledge that he can't for the moment reveal, he is inclined to frighten the faint-hearted.

In contrast to the speeches by the Tory business men was the speech by Sir Walter Smiles, an Empire builder. He had criticisms of the scheme in detail but not of its pioneering aims. He spoke as a shareholder—a shareholder like every other taxpayer—in this great public enterprise. Strachey made a second speech to reply to the debate. If the Hudsons in Columbus' crew had had their way, America would still be undiscovered. Strachey preferred to press on with opening up a new and fertile Africa.

MAURICE EDELMAN

THE MIXTURE AS BEFORE

THE main impression made by the Economic Survey for 1949 is that the Chancellor and his planners, faced with a situation in which there are more, rather than less, uncertainties than a year ago, have fallen back on the obvious, but not necessarily correct, policy of continuing on lines which served us well last year. The estimates are cautious: we can no longer expect production to expand at the rate it did in 1948, when we were recovering from the effects of the fuel crisis and when the fruits of demobilisation and reconversion of industry were still being reaped. Little enough has been done in the way of redistributing man-power, and no reliance can be placed on securing much greater output by this means. Equilibrium has been attained in the over-all balance of payments, but in terms of dollars we are still far from paying our way. So the country is exhorted to recognise that "the necessary conditions for economic and social stability" are that more exports must be sold to the dollar world; that employers and workers must continue to exercise restraint on prices, dividends and wages; and that a modest increase in capital investment (mostly on industrial plant) must be accompanied by a further dose of the disinflationary policy which inspired last year's Budget. If all goes well—and the Chancellor permits himself the expectation that "the year should be one of steady progress in every field"—the productivity of the nation's whole economy should be 2½ per cent. higher than in 1948, and some increase in personal consumption should be possible.

Such, in substance, is the picture presented by the Survey—not roseate, but broadly encouraging in that, with luck, we may hope to consolidate this year the impressive gains achieved in 1948. The question is, can we count on the good luck which is assumed? It is at this point that the uncertainties creep in. First and foremost, there is the possibility of an American recession affecting adversely, not merely the hoped-for expansion of British exports to the dollar world, but, indirectly, practically the whole of our export markets. Secondly, there are the doubts, which the Survey does little to resolve, whether another deflationary Budget can be put through without creating a "little slump" in the domestic market; indeed, the Survey accompanies its forecast of undiminished employment by the end of this year with the somewhat perplexing rider that there may be "some slackening of the intensity of demand for labour." Again, a big question mark overhangs the possibility of maintaining the present peg on wage rates. Can this be done without a sizable reduction of indirect taxation? But, if that course be adopted, what becomes of "disinflation"?

To these uncertain factors in the equation two others must be added. The Survey proceeds on the hypothesis that there will be no important diversion of Britain's productive resources to rearmament—an assumption which depends on international development as yet impossible to forecast. Finally, there is a curious incompatibility between the professed aims of Britain's future import-export policy. We are to sell more to the dollar world, while buying less from it; and simultaneously we are apparently to obtain more supplies from non-dollar countries without taking any particular steps to supply their wants. Significantly little is said about the necessity of developing East-West trade in Europe; and the Survey would have been more realistic if it had emphasised more clearly that the present artificial equilibrium which is temporarily being approached in Western Europe with the assistance of Marshall Aid and sterling credits cannot be converted into general recovery unless and until the United States, in its own balance of payments, accepts the obligations involved in its position as the world's great creditor country.

ON THE ROCKS

WHAT has happened to the British film industry? At this moment, when a majority of our cinemas are required by law to give British productions 45 per cent. of their screen space, it should be enjoying an unprecedented boom. On the contrary, seventeen of the twenty-six main studios are idle and the remainder are not working to capacity. About three thousand of a total of ten thousand studio workers have been discharged, and it is possible that more may be thrown out of work in the next few weeks. The cinema proprietors protest that British studios cannot supply them with enough films in the coming year to meet their quota obligations—the Board of Trade has already granted a very large number of exemptions—and are demanding that the quota be reduced, thus enabling them to hire more of the more profitable American productions. The producers, in turn, claim that they cannot get back enough money to meet their costs, that their working capital is tied up in completed films—for whose receipts they must wait nine to twelve months—and that they cannot raise any more money in the City at this time. In short, the argument runs, the producers cannot afford the large-scale production necessary to meet the quota without State aid in some form and without drastically reducing their costs.

These are the immediate symptoms of the slump. They have inspired a series of curative proposals, ranging from the demand for a remission of Entertainments Tax—made, in different forms, by both producers and exhibitors—to the provision of working capital by the State, through the new Film Finance Corporation. But many of the panaceas cancel each other out, for each section of the industry is seeking to solve its own problems at the expense of the others. The exhibitor, for instance, is not very interested in the origins of the film he shows. His aim in life is to get the films with the maximum box-office appeal at the lowest possible price; and to him, that means, by-and-large, from Hollywood. He considers British producers wasteful, believes the percentage of the takings they ask too high, and fears that they will try to solve their financial problem in part by squeezing even more money out of the exhibitor. The producers, however, want to secure a larger percentage of box-office receipts by reducing the amount taken by the exhibitors, the distributor or even by the State in Entertainments Tax. They pass on the charges of waste to the trade unions, insisting that padded wage-bills and restrictive practices have pushed costs beyond any reasonable limit, and that the unions must come to their senses. Hence the present wave of dismissals, in which union militants believe they have been victimised; they are prompted both by the desire for immediate economies and by the intention to "settle with" the unions while they are at a disadvantage.

But the more each part of the industry pleads its special case, the more evidence accumulates that the industry as a whole is sick. Its sickness is due to bad and sometimes appallingly inefficient management, to waste on overheads and middlemen, and above all to the development of monopoly.

Part of the confusion which surrounds this crisis results from the variety of roles played by the Rank organisation. Do the producers want help? Then Mr. Rank comes forward as a producer. Must the exhibitors' financial interests be protected? Mr. Rank is the biggest figure in the field of exhibition. Is the share of the renters (middle-men distributors) too large? Mr. Rank can plead for them too. At each stage in the career of a film, from its inception to the moment

it is screened, there is a Rank company to press its claims for whatever is going. Of course, there are other producers, renters and exhibitors. But the vertical structure of the Rank organisation, coupled with its dominant influence in each of the three main sections of the industry, permits Mr. Rank to call the tune and to adjust his losses and profits across the whole range of his operations. Under present conditions, a large-scale film enterprise *must* exercise control over all three stages. Otherwise it cannot secure the facilities or the cash to make a film, or secure enough bookings in the profitable theatres to earn back its cost. It was the inner drive of film capitalism that drove independent producers out of business and left the Korda concern the only important group now operating outside the Rank network.

The truth of the matter is that the production and exhibition ends of the industry do not balance. The basic pattern of the industry—and the habits and preferences of the cinema public—were established at a time when the great majority of films came from the United States. Since these films had paid back their costs before they ever reached this country, they could be rented to exhibitors at a much lower rate than any comparable British production, which had to meet its production expenses primarily from receipts in Britain. To offset this disadvantage, British producers could do two things. First, cut their costs. Secondly, try to secure a profit margin by earning money abroad. It is, in part, the costly and vain attempt to crash the U.S. market—an attempt which was doomed by the quarrel over the Dalton 75 per cent. tax and the imposition of the new high quota for British films—that has eaten up the capital of the big producers and run them into heavy losses. It is true that if money earned in some countries, notably Germany, could be released from exchange restrictions, the producers could get more of their investment back in ready cash. But, as things are, they are driven to find some way of making a profit from a distribution and exhibition system (including seat prices) which has been primarily designed to work on the basis of lower-cost American supplies.

The question to-day, therefore, is not merely the old problem of monopoly driving independent producers out, or to terms. It is the urgent question of how existing studios, technicians, equipment, stars and stories can be put to work to produce an expanding volume of British films which can meet the quota, save dollar spending on American films, and perhaps earn foreign currency into the bargain.

Let us take the case of the producers first. About £108 millions are taken at British box offices each year. Of that, the people who actually make the films receive at most some £10 millions. Assume, they say, that a decent first-feature now costs about £200,000 (in fact, the average cost of the most successful British films last year was more nearly £300,000). At best, the number of first-features that producers can make, with such receipts and at this cost level, is about fifty each year. Since the quota requirement is more nearly ninety a year, only part of which can be met by re-issues, it thus follows that more money must be made available to producers, both to meet the cost of a given picture, and to provide the capital without which an expansion of production cannot be achieved. Where is this to come from? The City, producers say, has dried up. Therefore the Government must play the good fairy, providing them with working capital. But this does not meet the gap between production costs and receipts. Very well, producers will cut costs to the bone—an assurance that would be more satisfying if there were more evidence of real managerial efficiency—and, in return for their efforts, will receive a larger share of the takings at the box-office.

To both Rank and Korda, however, the renting side of their businesses is extremely rewarding and, in Mr. Rank's case, the same is true of exhibition. Neither of these two groups really favours a raid on the profits of renters and exhibitors. The exhibitors, moreover, organised in the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association, are at this moment faced with wage demands totalling £6 millions from their employees; they claim, as they point to the stabilisation of seat prices for the last few years, that they cannot spare another penny. What is left? Only the £38 millions paid annually in Entertainments Tax. Remit some of this, the producers tell Sir Stafford Cripps, and we will divide it up, as a disguised subsidy, to producers in proportion to the success of their films at the box-office. If you cannot discriminate, for obvious reasons, between British and American films, then it is better to subsidise the Americans too, rather than that our native industry should perish for lack of revenue. If, in other words, Britain wants a large film industry, then the Treasury must be prepared to pay for it. There is some truth in this; but the producers' solution would smell sweeter if it came after a real effort to improve efficiency and if there were not signs that, in some degree, the present crisis has been allowed to develop to its present dimensions precisely in order to put pressure on the Chancellor, in effect, to subsidise waste, incompetence and financial muddle at the taxpayer's expense.

The exhibitors take a rather different line. It is intolerable, they argue, that extravagant production should be helped out by tax-remission. The Chancellor should either pass on the whole benefit of any tax-remission to the patron—thus, they hope, attracting a larger turnover—or he should permit them to raise prices; the anticipated increase in revenue could be divided up among the different sections of the industry in agreed proportions. The cinema-owners, moreover, argue that the quota experiment has ended in failure, and that there is no hope of getting enough films from British producers. Cut the quota, they urge, and let us have more of those nice, popular and cheap American films. At the same time, the Board of Trade should encourage the American companies to use their frozen credits here either to produce films on their own account or to go in with British firms which are short of capital. This argument is the final proof that the exhibitors, whose purpose in life is naturally to maximise their profits, regard the film as purely a commodity to be obtained as cheaply as possible. "No Orchids for Miss Blandish," which was made cheaply (£125,000) is the kind of British film which appeals most to them. The cultural content does not matter: its importance to the exhibitor is that it draws capacity audiences wherever it can be shown.

The question of distribution is more complicated. Until the Portal Committee reports later this year, we shall continue to lack adequate knowledge of how much the renter does, and how much he earns. But there is little doubt that the return for his services is excessive, and that control of distribution is a key factor in the development of monopoly conditions. When, moreover, the distributor is a mere agency of a large organisation, as in the case of Mr. Rank's General Film Distributors, standing between producers and exhibitors belonging to the same combine, it is a useful insurance against losses at the box-office or in the studios. It is certainly not the proper agency through which to channel State finance into the industry.

At this stage, whatever temporary solutions are put up to the Government as a means of re-starting production and ensuring a more stable and adequate financial basis for the industry, they can be nothing more than patches upon an unsound structure. Let us assume that capital is made available, that producers manage to make ends meet by combining production economies with a higher revenue from one source or another, and that the cameras begin to turn again. The immediate crisis of low production may have been overcome; but we are still left with the long-term question: What is to be done about monopoly control? We cannot have a film industry in this country that is culturally and economically healthy as long as a handful of big enterprises dominate it.

The independent producer now hardly exists. The directors and other technicians of talent must sign up with a large producer, or go begging. If, in the long run, the Government is to be responsible for setting the industry in an acceptable order—since this seems an impossible task for private capitalism to carry out—it must turn its attention to much more drastic remedies. First, it should consider requisitioning the idle studios at their nominal upkeep charge to their owners, until such time as the owners are able to use them productively themselves. These studios should then be leased to producers at their cost to the State. Secondly, it is almost certain that the State should create a new distribution outlet, to handle films made in the requisitioned studios, which would take only its working costs as a charge for its services. Thirdly, and this is the most delicate problem of all, it must guarantee theatrical bookings adequate to cover the cost of a reasonable production. This could be done in a number of ways. Every exhibitor in the country could be required to show a certain number of the films made in this way—perhaps ten per cent. Or a new circuit could be created, by picking out a number of cinemas chosen from the three big circuits and independents in proper proportion, and requiring this circuit to show all the State-sponsored films, just as Mr. Rank's theatres must take his productions from his studios. Or, finally, the State itself could nationalise enough cinemas to provide a proper outlet.

As an interim measure, the quota for all cinemas seems the most satisfactory. If this were done, finance would be available to the producers concerned because they would have guarantees of ultimate exhibition. If, moreover, enough films were made by producers with good credentials under this system, it is highly unlikely that the State would be dragged into backing a series of costly box-office flops. As long as the risk is spread, the gamble is just as reasonable as the gamble of putting up capital by means of the new Film Finance Corporation. We believe that some such solution must eventually be found. The sooner the Government realises this and begins to look at the industry with an eye to reconstruction instead of relief, the sooner we shall make progress towards the film industry this country needs.

A LONDON DIARY

Some of Lord Vansittart's friends should look after him. He is a man of apparently uncontrollable emotions who switches from one phobia to another; worse, he is a man of infinite credulity. He seems naively to believe anything that any European refugee cares to pour into his ears. Where I have checked Vansittart's speech at random, his "facts" do not bear examination. Let me take one or two simple cases. Apparently completely ignorant of Bulgarian usage, Vansittart charged Mr. Boev with hiding his real name, though, in fact, he no more hides it than a Russian named Ivan Ivanovitch would be hiding his identity if he called himself simply Ivan. Again, Paul Ignotus, a quiet Social Democrat, well known in the British Labour Movement, is the son of a Hungarian writer who became famous under his pen-name which he finally adopted and passed on, legally, to his son, who is therefore Mr. Ignotus and nothing else. Again, Mr. Cornea, whom Vansittart accuses of being "Russian-trained," has, I am told, never been in Russia. And so on and so on. More serious than such inaccuracies is the close resemblance between the technique adopted by Vansittart and that of Dr. Goebbels. If Goebbels wanted to smear anyone's reputation, he seldom bothered very much about the facts but merely to suggest that he had a Jewish name. Those who know the story of British Embassies in East Europe in the first years after the war, especially of

the British Embassy in Warsaw under Cavendish-Bentinck, will find Vansittart's charge that other countries permit their diplomats to interfere in British politics comically hypocritical. The most distressing aspect of the whole affair, however, was the reply of Lord Henderson. He is, of course, new to this kind of thing and may have been taken by surprise, but he seemed irresolutely to concur, instead of rebuking Vansittart for an attack on diplomats which was contrary to all usages of courtesy and decency, politically dangerous and factually wild.

* * *

Parents who conjure up ogres in bedtime stories may find it difficult to explain to the children who wake up in a nightmare that ogres do not exist after all. The American military have set themselves a similar problem about biological warfare. Three years ago, in the revulsion of feeling after Hiroshimo and Nagasaki, the War Department tried to offset it by saying "You ain't seen nuthin' yet." They released the Merck report on biological warfare to show that others could have ideas just as nasty as the atomic bomb. The Merck report was later withdrawn, but in the meantime there has been plenty of bedtime stories (not without substance) about the horrors of biological warfare. Mr. Forrestal, the retiring Secretary for Defence, is now trying to remove the particular fear from the American mind; the reason, I'm told by those who should know, is that since biological warfare does not involve billions of capital equipment or elaborate technological know-how, it can be devised by any country which has bacteriologists and chemists with sufficient devilish ingenuity. In short it is because the horror may be real, and not good publicity for the United States, that Mr. Forrestal dwells on it. To comfort Americans who may be kept awake at night, he said: "There is no direct comparison. The atomic bomb destroys not only life, but buildings and other physical structures, and also there is atomic radiation in contaminated areas. Biological warfare agents affect only living matter." The more one ponders this remark the more appalling the thought that our destinies may be in the hands of such men as Mr. Forrestal.

* * *

The Town and Country Planning Act really has teeth after all. The Central Land Board's decision to force the sale of a plot of land at Orpington is the first case under the Act of compulsory acquisition on behalf of a private purchaser. The vendors wanted £434, which included the "development value" appropriated by the Act to the State; the "existing use value" as agricultural land was £30. Negotiations were actually going on in 1947 when the Act was passed, and although "planning permission" for two bungalows had already been granted to an architect the vendors then withdrew their offer. The architect reported the case to the Board, and after eighteen months (during which many similar cases have been "under consideration by the Minister") the Board has acted. Presumably the order will be challenged—many lawyers argue that forcing the sale of land to a private purchaser is not within the words of the Act empowering the Board to "acquire land for any purpose connected with the performance of their functions under the Act." Despite the promise of compensation from the £300,000,000 fund, landowners have been sitting tight in the hope that this view is the correct one, and perhaps hoping alternatively that the Act wouldn't survive the present Government. It looks as though the deadlock in the land market, which among other effects has been completely stultifying Mr. Bevan's one-in-four allocation for private building, may now be broken.

* * *

Whatever may be said or thought about the need to democratise the National Coal Board, a tribute is certainly due to the Board's educational branch for its plans to assist recruitment of the right sort of personnel into the managerial ranks of the coal industry. A hundred N.C.B. scholarships, covering the whole cost of fees and maintenance, are offered this year for a 3-4-year University course in mining engineering. Fifty are to be allotted to 18-year-old school-leavers with distinctions in science and engineering in their Higher School Certificates, and fifty to candidates in the 18-25-age group selected from within the industry on the basis of their record at evening classes. If there are insufficient suitable candidates from schools, the miners' share of the scholarships will be greater. Having taken their University degree, these N.C.B. "scholars" will do a training course in the pits, at a commencing salary of £400 a year, for such period (up to three years) as is needed to enable them to qualify for Managers' Certificates. After that, colliery managers' jobs, with salaries up to £1,600 a year, are open to them. This strikes me as a sound plan for getting the right mixture of new blood into managerial positions; and I gather also that the N.C.B. is taking steps to provide technical education for trainees to fill the N.C.O. grades—deputies, shot-firers, electricians, and so forth—in whose case the Coal Bill now before Parliament empowers the Minister to require new, or higher, statutory qualifications. In the interests of safety, I hope these powers will be fully used.

* * *

We have all supped so deep of horrors that most of us believe we are beyond being shocked. I found I was wrong in thinking this when I read the other day a full official account of what is euphemistically known as female circumcision amongst the Muslim population of the Sudan. *The Times* carried one letter on the subject and then abruptly ceased the correspondence. I was not surprised, because the facts—and without giving the blunt facts there is no point in raising the topic at all—are not what are usually considered publishable. This is the difficulty in which Lady Huddleston (the wife of Sir Hubert who was Governor of the Sudan from 1940 to 1947) finds herself in trying to call public attention to this horror. To cut a nauseating story short, female circumcision in these parts usually means that girls of from 6 to 10 years old have a large part of the *labia majora* removed; the *labia minora* pared and the clitoris cut away with some old rusty razor by elderly women without any anaesthetic. This operation is carried out in privacy, the screams of the child being drowned by the attendant women who howl and beat gongs. In adult life these wounds have to be re-opened with every child born, and stitched up afterwards. As far as I can make out the only object of this ritual is to make sure that no woman shall find the sexual act anything but appallingly painful. I am told that the men demand that their wives should have been so circumcised. It is certainly a guarantee of chastity. The picture is slightly relieved by the fact that there is also a much smaller operation which is sometimes accepted instead. This is commonly called the "Egyptian" form of circumcision, though, in fact, the whole custom has died out in Egypt. When this matter was discussed in the House of Commons recently, all the speakers were naturally shy of using blunt words, but Mr. McNeil had clearly read the memorandum on the subject, and expressed scepticism only of the statement that use of the full and worst form of circumcision was increasing amongst adjoining tribes.

* * *

There are great difficulties in the way of stopping this custom. To pass a law or make a regulation might ease some consciences but would be unlikely to affect the practice. The first step is to transfer the operation to the hospitals, where boys are already circumcised under proper conditions by doctors. The difficulty here is that there may be good medical grounds for male circumcision; there is none for female. Therefore according to the ethics of the medical profession, no doctor will perform it. A special dispensation must be made by the General Medical Council, by which doctors in hospitals should be permitted to perform the minor and less brutal operation. In that case, chiefs might be prevailed upon to see that girls go to hospital and receive proper attention instead of being permanently crippled. This would remove 75 per cent. of the present suffering. The only other useful approach to the subject would seem to be to publish the facts, as I am doing here, so that Sudanese students who come to the West will be ashamed to support the custom which demands such loathesome cruelty and start a movement for marrying uncircumcised wives. If that begins from the top, as it were, the custom will die out, just as child marriage has died out in India because civilised Indians now prefer not to marry children.

* * *

The best comment I've seen on the discussion on spelling reform is made in a poem by Allan Laing which is published this week in this journal. To me it seems odd that Bernard Shaw, who rightly prides himself, as an Irishman, on pronouncing English more perfectly than any Englishman, should sponsor a system of spelling (if he really does) which logically would seem to demand full official sanction for the pronounciation of Eliza Doolittle. Or, if not Eliza Doolittle, why not? If spelling is to be phonetic, why not Cockney, as much as Yorkshire, Lancashire or any other English dialect? On the other hand, I wholeheartedly agree with G.B.S., Mr. Follick and others that we ought to save children and foreigners the miseries of learning present English spelling. The Americans have already gone half-way, and very sensible too. What is the harm in spelling "plough," "plow," and "through," "thru"?

* * *

Because they can get cars from America without purchase tax, most of the Embassies in London run big American cars. (The exception is the Soviet Embassy which has a very big Russian car.) The other day the wife of the Minister of one of the Eastern European countries, who is herself a very stalwart Communist, was getting into her car when she was stopped by a man selling violets. "Please buy a bunch, lady." No, she was sorry, she did not want one. "But, lady, they only cost . . ." "No." At last, after further fruitless persuasion the flower-seller resorted to abuse. "I'll tell you what, lady," he said, "when Joe Stalin comes to London, none of you capitalists will be able to swank in your big cars any more."

CRITIC

DISINVESTMENT

Whenas the clothing-coupon goes,
This liberty doth but disclose
The liquidation of our clothes.

The vision of abundant stocks
The window-shopping public mocks,
In tattered shirts and darnéd socks.

The price-tag on my lady's dress
Réduceth beauty to distress,
The while she maketh do with less.

The merchant moaneth sales are small,
Since we do lack the wherewithal—
The Budget surplus taketh all.

Nay, if they do not soon relax
The unremitting purchase tax
We'll have no stitch upon our backs.

Our garments, decent if austere,
With wear and tear will disappear,
Replenishment doth cost too dear.

While fashion shows awake the rush,
Shall beauty pine for silk and plush,
Attired in nothing but her blush.

Be clothing ne'er so coupon-free,
This Spartan isle will shortly be,
Methinks a nudist colony.

SAGITTARIUS

THIS ENGLAND

Prizes are awarded of £1 for the first entry and 5/- for each of the others printed.
Paste entries on a POSTCARD and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

The fact that they know about sex does not stop people committing sin.—*Sunday Pictorial.* (S. Kaminsky.)

Accommodation available in charming flat for debutante (occasional visits of mother possible). Social references exchanges.—Advt. in *Sunday Times.* (M. D. Barnes.)

When I read that Mr. Attlee had placed his feet on the table in the House of Commons when Princess Margaret attended, I said "Never!" If it is true, then all I can say is that he is not a fit and proper person to be Prime Minister.—Letter in *Yorkshire Evening Post.* (Harry Taylor.)

"I don't know whether or not I am the father of the child. I am only an apprentice," wrote a man to the Woking Bench in answer to a summons against him for an affiliation order.—*Woking Herald.* (T. M. Rueff.)

Children's Hour. "The Adventures of Henry VIII."—*Radio Times.* (V. M. Ounsted.)

"A sample of milk taken from the cow was found to be perfectly genuine."—Witness at East Grinstead (Sussex) Court.—*Evening News.* (S Smith.)

Seven Bardwell (Suffolk) housewives who reddened their seven council house doorsteps have been instructed by the District Council's rent collector to restore the steps to their original shade of grey without delay.—*Newcastle Daily Journal.* (J. Nevin.)

QUESTION MARK IN MALAYA

At the turns in the road the red earth, standing out against the trees and the fresh green grass that thickly covered the gentle hills, created an illusion of Devonshire. There were reminders that it was not Devon—the Malay driver, with his brown cap shaped like an upturned flowerpot, the occasional groups of thin tapioca trees. But the rubber trees might have been English, some sort of silver birch; only the slits in the bark and the clay cups, hung to catch the milky rubber, made them seem at all unusual. The illusion of England lasted until a civilian car came round a bend, with a great black shot-gun sticking out of a side window. The gun was held by a bearded Sikh in whose expression kindliness and ferocity were nicely balanced. The car was driven by an Englishman. No; it was not Devonshire. It was "bandit-infested" territory twenty miles from Kuala Lumpur.

On the rubber estate which was our destination, the British assistant had been murdered in November, the estate lorry had been three times ambushed and, three weeks ago, a Communist "bandit" had been killed, two policemen wounded, and the village Post Office burned down. There were now 32 special Malay police stationed on the estate, the entrance was guarded by entrenchments, the manager's bungalow surrounded by barbed wire, and the trees and undergrowth near the house flood-lit. The manager and his new assistant went everywhere with revolvers and never left the house without an armed escort. When friends called, they came always in two cars; with special police in the back seats. Yet, even so, we were to learn that, on the morning of our arrival, a Chinaman, armed with a Sten gun and a hand-grenade, had emerged from the undergrowth to ask the time from a party of Chinese labourers weeding out the scrub between the rubber trees. On the three previous mornings the British assistant had visited the weeding party at roughly the same hour. Because of our arrival he did not pay his morning visit—to the disappointment, no doubt, of the owner of the Sten gun. It was not until 24 hours later that the Chinese labourers said anything about the occurrence. Why the delay? In the answer to that question lies the explanation of Malaya's terrorist problem. A leaflet recently distributed by the Communists among the Chinese says: "If you offend the British, you will be taken to a detention camp and fed well. You will not lose your property, although you may be deported to China. If you offend us, you will be killed. It is better to offend the British."

At the moment, those Chinese squatters and villagers who live on the fringe of the jungles reluctantly agree with the Communists. It may be inconvenient to give food and money to armed men who pop out of the jungle, but it is better than being dead. The Chinese business-men feel the same way about their property. If you own a tin mine some miles away from the nearest police detachment, the commercial proposition is simple: "Pay protection money or have your mine flooded." The Chinese are accustomed to War Lords and disasters. They are selective in the choice of evils; and the lesser evil to-day is still to pay up and be safe. It will remain so until the Chinese community as a whole has more respect for the authority of the Government than that of the "bandits."

For "bandits," in the main, is the correct description of the Chinese Communist insurgents. They number, in all, about 10,000, mostly recent immigrants, out of a total population of nearly 5 millions. Some 4,000 are tough determined fighters; another 4,000 rather wish they had never got mixed up in the affair, but know that desertion spells death; and the remainder are part-time "bandits" who work by day, on a rubber estate or a tin mine, and take out their arms by night. Their function is to pass on information and stimulate terror when required. Perhaps 4 per cent. of the rebels are convinced Communists, but even they are murderers rather than Marxists. Previously they had controlled the trade union machine—an interesting experiment in trade unionism under which practically all subscriptions of the members of the unions were passed on to the Federation to which they were affiliated. Any undemocratic trade unionist who suggested that the individual union should retain some of the money collected could easily have the fallacy of his thinking explained to him on a dark night or, alternatively, have the need for thought eliminated entirely.

Why did the Communist leaders—their party had not been banned—turn to terrorism? Almost certainly, I think, the decision followed the Communist conference held in Calcutta last year. There it was resolved that the time had come to strike violently for power and give up the weak-kneed activities so far conducted more or less in the open. In May and June last year, the Communists struck both in Burma and Malaya. In Burma other threats to law and order have tended to obscure the fact that the Communists have been losing ground. In Malaya, too, they are weakening, as the statistics show; but the nature of their gradual defeat will not be readily apparent to the Chinese community or to the British planters so long as "incidents" continue.

Yet there is statistical evidence of improvement. In November, "incidents"—attacks on life or property—were running at the rate of 15 a day. They are now down to 5 a day, and the "bandits" are being pushed into jungles and remote areas where it is difficult to live. Normally they like to be near a squatter locality, on which they can batten, and from which they can operate their protection money system. Squatters are industrious Chinese who find bits of land that no one else is using and quickly convert them into fertile vegetable and fruit plots. During the Japanese occupation their numbers increased, and to-day total half a million. Between one and two hundred thousand, scattered over the whole length of the coutry, live near jungles or in remote parts where police and military protection is not immediate. When the police arrive, they are afraid to inform against the "bandits" because they know reprisals would be swift, and might come from innocent-looking cultivators living in their midst, whose arms had been buried just before the police turned up. Thus the only way to restore the security which the squatters and most other Chinese want is to clean up the worst of the squatter areas and to deport to China those who are suspected of being Communist sympathisers.

That is now being done by the Government. It may seem inhumane, but it is more humane than allowing a whole community to be terrorised; and the policy is beginning to bring results in information and the capture of "bandits." Every time, however, that a squatter area is purged by the authorities the terrorists retaliate for the loss of their sustenance by committing one or more murders in the locality. These operations are conducted by killer squads when the main body of "bandits" retreats into the jungle. They are the main reason why the planters, among others, are unwilling to believe that the situation is getting better.

How long this process of starving out and wearing down the "bandits" will take is uncertain. It may be six months or a year—depending on how many Communists reach Malaya from China, by sea or through Siam. The present rebels are for the most part inefficient and they lack leadership; but their activities show an increase in effectiveness each time there is an influx of colleagues from China, as when 20 Chinese landed recently on the East coast. For the authorities it is a race with time. The closing of the Siam border and the internal measures being taken against Communists in Siam should help; but the Chinese Communist victories in China do not. Indeed, the great question mark that hangs over Malaya is what the Chinese Communists will do if and when they have established their authority over all China. If they send aid to the Communists in Malaya, a much larger police force than the country has ever had before—larger, possibly, than it can afford—will be required to watch against infiltration from outside. Inside Malaya, the position is manageable. The well-to-do Chinese are sick of having to pay protection money, and the squatters are tired of being terrorised and having to contribute hard-won food. There is significance in the fact that, since last June, out of 346 civilians killed by terrorists, 240 have been Chinese. It is they who bear the brunt and suffer most.

If the Chinese community gave active support to the "bandits," nothing could be done to keep the country going. As it is, genuine support comes only from a section of the Chinese who have immigrated here in the last 20 years, and even that is slight. This is no Nationalist movement. The Malays themselves want self-government when they feel ready for it, but not government from China or by Chinese new-comers. The Chinese, too, in an unenthusiastic way are prepared to face up to the problems of self-government, but not government of this Communist pattern. Their lack of enthusiasm comes from the feeling that there is greater security for traders and cultivators under British rule than under any other form of government, and from the feeling also that the Malays at present have more than their share of political power. But the standard of living of all the Chinese is higher here than it would be in their own country. They are not anxious that anyone should interfere with that standard or try to reproduce here the pattern of China. Otherwise they would go back to China or would never have come here in the first place. Unfortunately, for good administration, the Chinese, who are not much concerned with politics, are apt to take the line of least resistance. It is, however, significant, that Chinese business men are now signing statutory

declarations promising not to pay protection money, and are even closing down their mines or estates rather than pay. The emphasis of respect is shifting slowly to the Government's side.

And the 1,000 British planters? Will they stay on much longer, producing rubber, unless peaceful conditions are speedily restored? A great number were prisoners in Japanese hands for over three years, and the past eight months of strain have not been kind to their nerves. They have not been driven off their estates (only twenty-five have been killed; communications are well maintained; and life is tolerably safe if you are careful), but many are talking of not returning to Malaya after their next home leave unless "banditry" has been eliminated. The British planters are important, and they have done a good job; but they are not quite as important as is generally supposed. Out of over three million acres under rubber, about one million are the responsibility of British planters; 40 per cent. of Malaya's rubber is grown in plots of under 100 acres. If the British planters leave, other (non-European) managers can be put in, and British control maintained from London and the towns of Malaya. There would be some loss of efficiency—perhaps a 20-25 per cent. drop in production—but this would not be finally disastrous: Malaya's rubber output is now higher than before the war, and it has not been appreciably affected by the terrorists.

The end of it all? This can only be guesswork—guesswork which may be thrown out by unpredictable developments in China. But, broadly, by the end of the year, there should only be the occasional shooting incident. The ultimate shape of Malayan progress will depend on future British policy, whose past and continuing mistakes I am not attempting to deal with in this article.

(To be concluded)

WOODROW WYATT

BUT THEY KEEP DRIFTING FROM WALES

DRIVEN by an angry wind, rain was falling horizontally on Hirwaun. The manager of the industrial estate (youngish ex-R.A.F.) said glumly: "How can you expect anybody to come to this place in such weather?" But February weather is not the only, or the worst, problem which confronts development planners in South Wales.

Successive Governments since 1934 have endeavoured to correct the "unbalance" of the inter-war years in the economy of South Wales by bringing into the area a number of new industries, such as light metal and plastic products, rayon and nylon hosiery, electric motors, chemicals and toys. Given greater impetus since the Labour Government took office, this planned drive for diversity has achieved considerable success: in 1939 the number of workpeople employed in the new industries was 3,000; it is 73,000 to-day. Excluding the quite substantial number of modern factories scattered singly or in small groups in the mining valleys, this new employment is concentrated in four industrial estates. The oldest and largest is Treforest, near Cardiff, where 10,000 workers are now employed, and are housed mainly in Cardiff or Pontypridd. Fforestfach, just outside Swansea, is a new venture; it boasts, so far, a dozen factories, but is capable of considerable expansion. The other two estates—Bridgend, midway between Cardiff and Swansea, and Hirwaun, in the heart of the Merthyr-Aberdare mining district—are converted Royal Ordnance Factories. Both have suffered to some extent from the initial handicap of having been built for a purpose different to that for which they are now used.

The most serious problems, however, which face the new industries lie not so much in construction or adaptation of factories as in deficiencies of housing and transport. In their housing programmes, local authorities quite understandably give preference to the mining community. They argue that over-crowding and insanitary conditions in some of the mining valleys are endangering recruitment; first priority on the housing lists should therefore be given to miners. The argument is cogent; but, as a result, progress in the new industries is undeniably handicapped. In many cases, managers, foremen and key workers have to be imported from outside South Wales; and they especially have found it difficult to get suitable accommodation in the valley towns or near the industrial estates. Many of them have returned to their homes—with upsetting effects on their factory's output—after staying for an uncomfortable few months in lodgings or in crumbling war-time bungalows. As for transport, Treforest and Fforestfach are comparatively well-served, but workers living in the bungalows round Hirwaun or in the nearby villages must face a walk of over five miles from the nearest town, Aberdare, if they go to the pictures and fail to catch the last homeward bus at 9 p.m. After more than three years of existence, Hirwaun is employing only 2,500 workers—half its full capacity.

It is in relation, however, to the primary objective of development planning in South Wales—the provision of employment for disabled adult male workers—that the progress of the new industries evokes most criticism locally. For the most part the new industries want cheap, young female labour to keep production costs low. This desire, logical enough in competitive capitalist enterprises, conflicts with the aim of doing something to reduce male unemployment. In South Wales to-day unemployment, at 40,000, represents 6 per cent., as compared with less than half that figure for Britain as a whole; and a high proportion of the unemployed are silicosis cases, partially disabled men whose employability is very limited.

The present Government, unlike its predecessors, has made a start towards finding a solution for this problem. Ten "Grenfell" factories have been planned, to be let on condition that the tenant firm draws at least 50 per cent. of its labour force from the ranks of disabled ex-miners. Three are already in operation; a further three have been let; and the remaining four are approaching completion. This scheme, it is hoped, will absorb at least one thousand of the disabled. Then there are the "Remploy" factories, already constructed, which will be run by the Disabled Persons Employment Corporation and should provide work for nearly two thousand of the disabled who are certified as being fit for "sheltered employment" only. In addition, many private firms are employing independently a quota of disabled ex-miners. One example is a textile factory at Mountain Ash; and work for as many as two hundred will be found, it is hoped, in the new Austin Motors factory at Bargoed.

Commendable as they are, all these measures have so far only touched the fringe of the problem. It is difficult to obtain precise figures; but the number of disabled unemployed males in South Wales almost certainly exceeds 13,000. One finds, therefore, in the area a tendency to ask insistently that more should be done. Some suggest that the National Coal Board should be empowered to establish factories producing locally the accessories of coal-mining. Others urge that the Government should subsidise firms employing disabled personnel to compensate them for lower productivity and higher labour costs. Much is made of the case of one electrical firm in the area which at one time employed 300 disabled male workers, but had to dismiss all but sixteen in order to compete with rivals using cheap, female labour. Others, again, criticise the Government for the relatively small scale on which the "Remploy" scheme has been launched.

In general, South Wales is critical of the whole attitude of Whitehall towards development planning in the area. Critics complain that inadequate "vetting" of firms who applied for factory space in the industrial estates led, in the immediate post-war years, to many workers being thrown out of employment as a result of their employers' bankruptcy. They allege also that too many of the new industries established are highly susceptible to seasonable fluctuations in demand. The Government's answer would presumably be that action had to be quickly improvised to avert excessive post-war unemployment in the area, and that errors of this sort were unavoidable. But this reply does not satisfy Welsh critics. They retort that the fundamental reason for the mistakes that have been made and for the lack of more generous, more imaginative treatment of the special difficulties of South Wales is that there is too little devolution of real power, too much remote control from London. To clinch their argument, they point to the continued drift of population from the area. Migration from Wales is still running at an annual rate of over 7,000. This figure compares favourably with the annual average of 25,000 in the inter-war period, but it is a sad reminder of a trend not yet reversed.

The explanation is, I think, in part psychological. "Young people are sceptical in these valleys," a Labour M.P. remarked to me. It is not only the local feeling that Wales is a "forgotten country" that creates this scepticism. To an extent greater than is perhaps the case in other parts of Britain, youth in South Wales is Socialist; and its conception of Socialism does not square with the half-way-house economy which, as they see it, has been achieved since 1945. In what they regard as still a predominantly capitalist order, there is bound, they argue, to be another slump, of which industrial Wales would be the first, perhaps the worst hit, victim. And slumps have one thing in common with explosions of atomic bombs: the best thing is not to be there when they occur.

ANDREW HARGRAVE

LEIPZIG FAIR

TWICE every year the forbidden land opens its gates to all comers. The grey pass in four languages is easily obtainable at a formal application, and no questions asked. Whether Eastern or Western, Socialist or capitalist, progressive or reactionary, peace-loving or war-mongering, all are welcome to Leipzig, where for one brief week Soviet Germany makes things as easy, comfortable, and expensive for them as in the Hotel Metropole in Moscow.

And indeed they come. The parking spaces in front of the exhibition halls and the Intourist restaurants are crammed with the latest types of American luxury cars and all manner of international number plates, Dutch, Belgian, and Scandianvian predominating. The "allies" are there, too, British, American, French, from blockaded Berlin. They were reinforced this year by the traditional tough old English lady who fought and argued her way in *via* Prague and Dresden on two pounds of coffee, several oranges, no visas, no stamps, and no money. During these brief five days anything is possible and almost anything permitted with a wink of the official eye. The barriers and check points along the Autobahn are open, and Soviet Army sentries salute smartly and smile broadly at the brave spies travelling into darkest Germany.

Leipzig, this March, has taken on a determinedly Russian air. The red flags and pennons, the streamers and posters which, with clenched fists tearing asunder heavy chains, threaten the impending unification of Germany; the low grey sky; the intense cold, ankle-deep slushy snow in all streets and squares; the enormous crowds of drably but warmly dressed people pushing along the pavements in unending streams, while loud-speakers overhead blare forth Socialist marches alternating with relayed speeches by Pieck and Grotewohl; trams, buses, exhibition halls, cafés, restaurants, waiting rooms filled to bursting point with the same uniform human mass—they convey little of Germany and much of the Soviet Union as one imagines it or has been told about by the Russians themselves.

The Russians themselves are not in evidence in Leipzig. During a whole day I saw one officer and two men shuffling through the snow. Nobody paid any attention to them.

Is the Soviet Zone, poorest and most dismantled part of Germany, making the grade, after all? The Leipzig Fair is certainly dressed up as one huge demonstration that it is, and that it owes whatever prosperity it is achieving solely to its own strenuous efforts of planning and producing in the face of a hostile, blockading Marshall world. (Western Germany, has, in fact, effectively boycotted the Fair. People inside and outside the exhibition halls are better and more warmly dressed. They are wearing better quality shoes, and they definitely look much better fed than a year or two ago. Unmistakably they are more cheerful. Take any handful of people from a Leipzig Street and mix it with a similar handful from Frankfurt and Hamburg; you will find it difficult, if not impossible, to tell which is which and who is who. Ordinary shops selling consumer goods away from the main, foreigner-thronged streets seem to tell the same story. They are less well and amply stocked than those in Western Germany, but they are very much better stocked than a year ago, and prices are considerably lower.

The impression gained is that somehow or other, through exhortation, cajoling, speeches, charts, production targets, slogans and that particular German brand of Stakhanovism known and much maligned and laughed at as the "Hennecke Movement," the Russians are slowly pushing this exhausted economy up the steep slope. There is no fairy-tale magic about it as there was in Western Germany nine months ago; on the contrary, painfully and with much cursing and sweating and moaning, and accompanied by much ridiculous boasting, the cart is pulled out of the mud.

In many respects the results are still poor, and very frequently nowhere near standing comparison, in quality and quantity, with industrial products from Western Germany. The leather industry, judging from its Leipzig exhibits, is still as shoddy as in 1946. But textiles showed a great and visible improvement in quality, variety, taste and imagination in design. Household china, on the other hand reminded one of the cheapest Japanese export wares; here design and variety seem to have been reduced, against previous years, deliberately to the lowest, broadest common denominator of taste. I did not see a single cup or plate that I would care to have on my table. Toys, however, were a sheer delight, and so was some of the glass and the luxury china. Experts tell me that there was some remarkable work shown by the optical and machine tool industries. There are fascinating new Leica cameras, and there is what looks like a very well made range of new BMW motor cars. The food industry showed up badly. Soviet German biscuits and chocolate, sugarless and synthetic, are still uneatable.

The nationalisation of all the Zone's basic industries appears to have gone very far and now seems to embrace virtually all its important production branches in the so-called *Volkseigene Betriebe*, meaning industries owned by the people, and bracketed together regionally and according to products in large co-operative combines. The Fair this year was dominated by them and by hundreds of pictures of German Stakhanovite workers with their records and achievements listed below their over-lifesize portraits on coloured charts and graphs. I found that this propaganda achieved, at least in me, the opposite of its intended effect; far from introducing the "human element" into the deadness of industrial production processes, it somehow seemed to drain the life-blood out of them; indeed, its uniform cardboard dullness overlaid an otherwise by no means unimpressive show with an inanimate coating of paperish boosting and boasting. I found that few people stopped to look at the portrait of Martha Mueller who had exceeded her target of sorting needles by 112½ per cent., or at that of a Saxon glass blower who was stated to have greatly improved quality and quantity of his product by "processes of sharp thinking." Yet my overall impression was that even incessant coaxing coupled with persistent political indoctrination cannot fail, in the end, to produce results.

The Soviet-owned limited companies are still very much in evidence, although a number of them have been returned to German ownership during the past year, and others have now been allowed to produce at least partly for German consumption. Those which have been retained by the Russians, like the Meissen porcelain manufacture, have no control over either their products or their markets. Meissen, I was assured, is again producing at peace-time capacity and with peace-time quality. The entire output goes to "Rasno-Export," the Soviet-owned and Soviet-managed purchasing company which ships a proportion to the Soviet Union and sells the rest on the world market against hard currency, an ingenious method of getting the most out of reparations from current production. The Meissen people themselves have no idea what their products sell for abroad. They only know that they have to supply "Rasno" at the 1939 price level.

The scramble for hard currency goes to extraordinary lengths in Leipzig. Although everything is done to attract foreign visitors, they are so ruthlessly and unashamedly fleeced from the moment of their arrival that few can afford to stay for more than a day or two. The black market in foreign currencies, practised by the Russians in former years in a haphazard and disorganised way, has been stream-lined. Now it is "Valuta Mark" or nothing. This is a specially printed currency issued for the Leipzig Fair by the Soviet Zone National Bank and obtainable at the ruinous "official" rate at an official exchange centre against hard currency only. Nothing can be had without it, neither food, lodging, or petrol. With it, everything is obtainable, and in unlimited quantities. There is no rationing at Intourist (their restaurants have multiplied like mushrooms), and there are no coupons at the petrol station. But prices are forbidding, and most Dutch, Swiss, Belgian, and French buyers who had been unaware of this new system and brought only a very few carefully hoarded and smuggled dollar bills with them, fled after the first day.

PETER DE MENDELSSOHN

SO THEY SAY . . .

IN the House of Lords on March 9 Lord Vansittart made a series of sensational charges against certain Eastern European diplomats in London, specifically naming Embassies, Legations and Friendship Associations. The national press made it the main story of the day. Headlines were :—

Daily Telegraph : LONDON SATELLITE CLUBS : LORD VANSITTART ON "HOTBEDS OF COMMUNISM."

Daily Graphic : IRON CURTAIN ENVOYS SET UP SPY RING HERE.

Daily Mail : "SPIES" IN THE EMBASSIES.

News Chronicle : EMBASSIES AS H.Q. FOR SPIES.

Daily Express : PEER ACCUSES EMBASSY MEN.

The Times : "INFILTRATION" OF BRITAIN.

Daily Herald : CURTAIN DIPLOMATS KEPT UNDER WATCH.

Daily Mirror : FOLK WHO DARE NOT WALK ALONE IN LONDON.

Within 24 hours, five of the eight "hotbeds" had issued denials, explanations, or comments—most of them at the prompting of the *Daily Telegraph*, which was the only newspaper to make any effort to follow up the story. So far as I can find, *The Times*, *Graphic*, *Herald* and *Mail* failed to publish any denials; the *Mirror* published one, and the *News Chronicle* and *Express* two apiece. The *Daily Telegraph* printed five (plus the information that the Hungarian Association had been closed for a year).

* * *

Department of Sudden Trepidation

Daily Mirror, February 24 :—

ZILLIACUS DROPPED, SAYS "BLOODY FUNNY."

Daily Mirror, February 25 :—

The *Daily Mirror* has reported the word "bloody" . . . Is this a sign of new vigour in our speech and a revolt against hypocrisy? Or is it not often a childish use of meaningless and offensive sounds because we are too sloppy-minded to learn to speak? How deeply do our readers feel about it . . ?

* * *

Which Paper Does the Editor Read ?

Daily Graphic, February 28 :—

All journalists who are proud and worthy of their profession must endorse the speech which the Attorney-General delivered a few days ago to the Newspaper Society. . . At the end of his speech [he] said : "Whatever faults the British Press has, I think it is a very fine Press."

Feeling proud and worthy, and eager to endorse the Attorney-General's remarks, I looked up the *Daily Graphic* report of his speech (February 23). It was entirely devoted to his remarks about "invasions of privacy" by newspapers, and, far from mentioning his tribute to the Press, had him concluding on the following note :—

Papers should lead taste on these matters, not pander to the vulgar.

* * *

That Keyhole Correspondent Again

Evening Standard, February 26— :—

All the Socialists [at Shanklin] had a good breakfast—cereal, kippers or haddock, marmalade. But there were no eggs.

Sunday Express, February 27 :—

Careful management had resulted in Mr. Strachey being able to offer his guests bacon and eggs. . . .

* * *

The Gentlemen of the Press

The six Russian wives who arrived in Britain on March 9th must have received an unforgettable impression of the zeal exhibited by at least one British newspaper in pursuit of its story. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the visitors maintained a "stony silence" at Northolt—although a *Mirror* photograph shows them all smiling broadly. After an assistant to the Russian Ambassador had been cut by glass from a photographer's flash-bulb, the party was followed to the very doorsteps of its rooms at the Park Lane Hotel, where the *Mirror*, after being told that the wives were "very tired," was further informed that it was being "very rude—you can't see anybody to-night." Back again, undeterred, early next morning, the *Mirror* reporter managed to lift one corner of the iron curtain protecting Rooms 516, 532 and 533 :—

BUTTONS AND BOWS ON THE NIGHTIES

Inside the rooms, six wives from Moscow were having breakfast in bed. And quiet though their shoes were, their nighties were really something. Gay and flowery with buttons and bows, they greet the morning sunshine like a breath of spring . . .

The reporter was then astonished to find that, when the wives came downstairs they greeted him "like the cold blast of winter . . ."

AUTOLYCUS

KRWELTI TW CHILDREN

Mai hart iz sad for littel wuns
  Hw uend dheir uei tw skwl
Tw lern dhe Inglish speling uith
  Its total lak ov rwl.

Dhe aiern enterz taini soulz
  And dhei lwz awl dheir bauns
In lerning uerds dhei kannot spel
  And spels dhei kan't pronauns.

Nau aut upon dhe Parliment
  Dhat thuortid children's blis,
Prifering prezent drudgeri
  Tw luvli stuf laik dhis !

ALLAN M. LAING.

ARTIST, CRITIC, PUBLIC

[This is Mr. Mortimer's response to our request to give his own views on the relation of the art critic to the public and the artist. We hope to publish similar articles by critics of music and poetry.]

"FROM most contemporary painting I can get no pleasure; often I can't make out even what the painter is trying to do; and you critics, when you praise one picture and damn another, seem to use no criterion except your personal taste. I can see the difference of course between a Munnings and a Matisse, but none between the 'modern' painters you admire and those you despise. You critics give me no help about this, for you don't agree even among yourselves. Why is there now this discordance among experts, and this gulf between the artist and the public?"

Such objections as these trouble a great many persons who are thoughtful, well-read, fond of music, and widely travelled. (To the uncultivated, of whatever class, modern painting is merely a joke.) The problems raised are alarmingly important, unless you fancy that humanity has outgrown its need for art; they are also alarmingly complicated. Theorists always run to simplification; they tend to explain a phenomenon by one cause when it has several; and this weakness seems particularly tempting to those of us who theorise about art. I am anxious now to avoid it, at the risk even of appearing intricate or evasive.

First a counter-attack upon those who offer such objections. "How many hours a year do you devote to the study of painting? Do you go to the National Gallery as often as once a month? If you did not listen to music twelve times a year what would you expect to get out of Beethoven, to say nothing of Bartok?" Here, I suggest, we find a vicious circle: people don't learn to enjoy pictures because they seldom look at them; and they seldom look at pictures, because they have not learnt to enjoy them. The public that does look and does enjoy is much larger than it was fifty years ago, yet I doubt whether for every fifty persons who have made the effort required for the appreciation of Gibbon or Bach, there is one who has similarly trained himself to delight in Raphael.

This brings me to the critics, among whom I include not only professional writers but museum-directors and collectors. Among these (who all have devoted much time to looking at pictures) the agreement is very much wider, I believe, than my "objector" supposes. If I found myself, for instance, with the art-critics of *The Times*, and *The Sunday Times*, the editor of *The Burlington Magazine*, the Directors of the National Gallery, the Tate, and the Victoria and Albert, we should be unanimous, I suspect, in our general estimate of ninety-nine painters in every hundred. Each one of us might greatly admire, no doubt, a few contemporary artists whom some of the others found merely respectable or not even that. Differences of temperament would show also in our several valuations of some Old Masters. But there would be found a consensus as general as any that exists among persons similarly occupied with the arts of fiction or music. "What about the Chantrey Bequest?" some one may ask. "There is, after all, a controversy." Yes, but the six experts I have instanced would, I am confident, think about this much as I do; and, of the people who don't, precious few, I suspect, spend much time looking at Old Masters.

Now for the suggestion that critics judge by their individual sensibility rather than by any objective criterion. This is true; it has indeed, I think, always been true. The "rules" that critics once pretended to apply were mostly used merely to rationalise their intuitions; and if we have now ceased to apply such rules, it is because they have been proved invalid. In the past critics used to complain, for instance, that a figure was not anatomically correct; and, if the painter was aiming at such anatomical correctness, the censure may have been justified. But if you apply this criterion to the frescoes of Giotto (or the sculpture at Chartres), these supreme masterpieces would be condemned; it cannot, therefore, be universally applicable. To a trained eye some pictures are no more like works of art than Hansard is like verse, but the laws of pictorial composition cannot be reduced to a rule of thumb as can the laws of prosody. Every criterion in which critics have sought to generalise their experience has been exploded. Modern critics are not more arbitrary than their predecessors: they are merely more candid in their dependence upon a trained sensibility. These points made, I must admit that painting is to-day enormously more difficult to approach than ever before. What are the causes of this disaster?

Just over a hundred years ago Western Europe suffered a sharp decline in visual taste, a decline even more conspicuous in architecture than in sculpture and painting. Whether this was chiefly due to the increased power of the bourgeoisie, or rather—as I suspect—to the spread of machinery, it opened between the painter and the public a chasm which has continued to widen. Good artists found their innovations were unwelcome; and poor artists, instead of imitating their betters, as had been their practice, found it profitable to satisfy and to debase further the public taste. First Courbet, then Manet, then the Impressionists, mystified—and therefore disgusted—even those who thought themselves to be cultivated. It must have seemed at the end of the century that the gulf between the painter and the public could not become any larger.

Alas, it has; and for the following reason. Good painters have always sought something beside the exact representation of appearances; and since the early years of the twentieth century they have become less and less concerned as a rule with representation of any sort. Some of them have been no more concerned with imitating anything in nature than are composers of music: these concentrate upon constructing objects that delight by the formal relationships they contain. Most painters, however, do still represent a subject, more or less recognisably, but the subject is seldom either so chosen or so treated as to please in its own right. You are not encouraged, indeed you are hardly allowed, to enjoy the charms of a nude, for instance, *qua* nude. Another school of artists, the surrealists, are often exact in representation, but use this only in order to disquiet. Their painting is more puzzling than Frith's or Marcus Stone's, but it is equally "literary" in the worst sense of the word. The cubists and surrealists stand at the extremes of two contrary currents in painting. The only thing common to them is that they fail alike to communicate successfully to the public.

Now communication is the purpose of all art. Though a man may paint or write merely from a desire for self-expression, the result does not function as a work of art until somebody receives a communication from it. Often there may be a time-lag in such communication, due to the variety of styles or idioms now in use, and to the rapidity with which these have changed. Only forty years ago Van Gogh's pictures bewildered a majority even of experts, and excited in the general public howls of derision. To-day, in reproduction, they have gained the popularity once enjoyed by *The Monarch of the Glen*. On this analogy can we expect that the cubist works of Picasso or the abstractions of Mr. Ben Nicolson will delight the next generation of Suburban Man? I am doubtful. When Van Gogh failed to communicate, it was because of novelties in his technique (drawing, handling and colour), rather than of any great deviation from the traditional subject-matter of the painter: he was passionately interested in representation. His *Sunflowers* are popular just because they suggest so vividly the sunniness of the sun and the floweriness of flowers. No suggestion of this sort comes from cubist or abstract painting; and the emotion they seek to communicate by purely formal or plastic means reaches only a most limited public.

At the heart of what may be called the problem of non-communication we find the question: is it poetry or music that painting ought to resemble? The answer may well be that it is legitimate for it to approximate to either, as the artist prefers. But if he opts for a self-contained world like that of the string-quartet, if he sacrifices the pleasures made available in poetry by what men find noble or seductive in actuality or in imagination, if—in fact—he is unconcerned with subject, then he deprives himself of what has hitherto given inspiration to the greatest painters as well as delight to their public.

Until about a hundred years ago artists were usually happy to treat the subjects required by their patrons. The resulting works represented aspects of real or imaginary life that were edifying, informative or sensuously pleasurable—as in a Fra Angelico Madonna, a Botticelli Venus, a Raphael portrait, a Rubens battle-piece, a scriptural scene by Rembrandt, a Fragonard *fête* or a Turner landscape. To enjoy such works as these there was no need to be a serious devotee of painting; and usually, one may suspect, what patron and public enjoyed was the subject of the picture rather than its specifically aesthetic qualities. Interest in the subject, however, could eventually lead anyone with an eye for painting so to train it that he learnt to make the full and discriminating aesthetic response. To-day many such potential enjoyers of painting are never tempted into the habit of looking at pictures. The painter plumes himself upon an independence such as was never dreamt of by Piero della Francesca or Titian or Watteau. To paint the subjects that people like is, he thinks, below his dignity. In fact it is above his capacity,—not because he lacks the accomplishment, but because he lacks the impulse.

If painters are now so seldom concerned with subjects which are intrinsically significant or attractive, it may be partly because the reaction against the popular painting of the 19th century has not yet exhausted itself, partly because the photographer has taken over some of the artist's old functions. The chief reason is more profound: it is the decline alike of Christianity and Humanism, the rarity of faith in the glories of either Heaven or Earth. But what about Communism? This is a religion vital enough to inspire both martyrs and inquisitors. It might be expected to inspire painters; but who can pretend that Soviet painting is not feebler even than anything our dear old Royal Academy can produce? Is this because it has to be propagandist? I fancy not. Didacticism is far less of a burden to the painter than to the novelist, because subject is so much less important in painting than in fiction. Many of the greatest painters can indeed be considered propagandists, whether for the Church, or for Venice, or for some monarch. The trouble with Communism is rather that it requires the painter to please the untrained eyes of bureaucrats and the populace. It has, moreover, conquered only peoples without a great pictorial tradition.

The art of painting has, I believe, been everywhere declining since 1914; and the decline has been to some extent concealed only because artists who were at work before 1914 are still mercifully active. The simultaneous diminution in concern with subject is only a symptom of this decline. Its cause is the spiritual and material distress that has descended upon the world. The flight from representation is a turning away from the world into oneself: it reflects, however unconsciously, a distaste for the environment, not to say an aversion from life. The regeneration of painting cannot come from a return to subject. This would probably be one of its results, but the only cause for it would be one of two highly improbable occurrences: either a revival of religion, or a renewed sense of the splendour and tragedy that can dignify the fate of man.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

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The Arts and Entertainment

OPERA AND CONCERT

A NEW *Carmen* at Sadler's Wells, alongside a fairly recent production at Covent Garden (not to mention two current films and a ballet!), seems at first glance just the sort of wasteful duplication which ought to be avoided. But the case is not really on a level with the Covent Garden *Figaro*. In the first place, a seat at Sadler's Wells costs roughly half the price of a seat at Covent Garden: the Wells has its own faithful public which rightly expects to see all the popular favourites every few years. And *Carmen*, originally an *opéra-comique* with spoken dialogue, belongs by its nature, more even than *Figaro*, to the smaller and more intimate stage. It must be added that the performance which I saw (the third, not the first) reached a high musical standard, superior to the run of those given at Covent Garden. Though James Johnston is not much of an actor, none of our younger English tenors can approach him vocally; the conclusion of the Flower Song was both musically phrased and genuinely exciting as sheer tone. Anna Pollak's Carmen has been much underpraised; at any rate, it gave me continuous pleasure, which is more than I remember to have felt in the presence of any other English exponent of the part. To pretend that she has the vocal or physical glamour of a Calvé or a Supervia would be absurd; but she looks well, moves well, acts with rare tact and distinction, and sings the music clearly, accurately and attractively, without any of that ghastly sham-temperamental coarsening of the tone and slopping over the edge of the note which the average Carmen, of whatever nationality, considers *de rigueur* as the one universally recognised way of conveying irresistible abandon. Escamillo and Micaela, though far less good, were adequate.

Tyrone Guthrie, who produced, contrived wonders in persuading his singers to avoid wooden and meaningless gestures, and achieved a remarkably tense and clear first act: an impression heightened by Reginald Woolley's decorative black-and-white sets and costumes. Much of this *Carmen*, in fact, came to the audience with the force of a new work, and provided fresh evidence that Mr. Guthrie might one day become an opera producer of the first order, if only . . . well, if only he were either more musical himself, or modest enough to take advice from some truly musical friend or colleague. At present his work is spoiled by easily avoidable blunders; he clears away traditional absurdities with one hand, only to introduce new follies with the other. Thus, Micaela's pert behaviour with the soldiers suggests that, so far from being a complete contrast to Carmen, she is merely an inexperienced provincial rival. Again, Mr. Guthrie's mania for darkness has led him, at the beginning of Act II, into an absurd contradiction of the librettists' and composer's clearly expressed intentions: instead of the gay and brilliantly lit interior of Lillas Pastia's tavern, with Carmen delivering her smash-hit gypsy song, we are stupefied to find ourselves in a gloomy courtyard, filled with somnolent shapes recovering (one is expected to assume) from the effects of a previous orgy, and slowly brought to life by the *Chanson Bohème*, two verses of which are impudently stolen from Carmen and given to Mercedes and Frasquita. And so it goes on: Don José's wonderful arrival later in the same act (to his unaccompanied G minor song "off") ruined by a lot of funny business with a ladder and a hay-loft, and the last scene of the opera, in which he murders Carmen, by the assumption (wildly inconsistent with the music) that he is drunk—physically, alcoholically drunk! It is the clear duty of the Sadler's Wells musical staff to restrain any producer, no matter how brilliant (and Mr. Guthrie *is* brilliant), from all such vagaries as these, even if it means trouble at rehearsals. Whether or not the producer should ever be an autocrat in the ordinary theatre, in the opera-house he must remain a partner—and, in the last resort, a junior partner.

Last week's Contemporary Music Centre concert contained one very interesting new work: a string quartet by Benjamin Frankel. It is his fourth essay in this genre, and such intensive application has evidently borne fruit, for the new quartet is in every sense a mature work, not only in its musicianly style and lay-out, and in the clarity and delicacy of its sound, but also in the rich and consistent vein of emotion which the composer has tapped and explored. Indeed, the only objection that arises at a first hearing is that there may be rather too great a similarity of mood (preponderantly elegiac), and to some extent of tempo also, between the four movements; but this is an impression which may well vanish with familiarity.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR

RADIO NOTES

THERE are times when it is necessary to state the obvious. Because a reviewer criticises a particular Shakespeare production it does not mean that he is not convinced of the extreme importance of the B.B.C.'s keeping Shakespeare's plays, many of which have yet to be heard on the air, in permanent repertory. In a sense, any production, so long as it gives us Shakespeare's words with as little cutting as possible, is better than no production; just as any text, no matter how blurred or tiny the type, is better than none at all. But current broadcasts of Shakespeare do raise two distinct problems that constantly face B.B.C. producers. The first is that of the limits of radio as a medium for drama written for the stage; the second, that of audience. Take last week's *Macbeth*. A most respect-worthy production, it succeeded at points where stage versions frequently fall down: the weird sisters, for instance, were presented with an intimacy and directness that gave them a reality uncommon on the stage. The acting was always adequate and subdued to the text; neither Mr. Stephen Murray, as Macbeth, nor Miss Flora Robson, as Lady Macbeth, seemed to me quite to reach the stature the roles demand, but many of the smaller parts were outstandingly good, in particular Mr. Dereck Guyler as Macduff and Miss Patricia Hayes as Macduff's son. It was when the producer, Mr. Wilfred Grantham, attempted to compete with the stage that dissatisfaction crept in; all the attempts to suggest crowds, noises off, and so on, distracted the attention from what was being said. There was, for instance, a horse that whinnied during the battle-scenes; having identified it as a horse, one found oneself waiting for it again and again, and the sound was too distinctive to be taken for granted; it brought with it its own associations, and for me they were not those of *Macbeth* but of the Russian film *Alexander Nevsky*.

It seems, then, that broadcast Shakespeare is most satisfactory when it approximates to the condition of an ideal reading of the text rather than to a substitute for a stage-production. Which brings us to the producer's second problem. What knowledge of the play can he assume in his listeners? Is his function that of the populariser? When the production, as this was, is in the Third Programme, surely he can assume a pretty thorough knowledge. He can assume that the listener will have his Shakespeare at hand, and is probably following the broadcast

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Company Meeting

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RECORD FIGURES AGAIN

THE 95th ordinary general meeting of The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China will be held in London, E.C., on April 4.

The following is an extract from the statement by the chairman, Mr. V. A. Grantham, circulated with the report and accounts for the year 1948:—

This year we have again to deal with record figures, the total of the balance sheet being £12,132,342 higher at £138,421,141. On the liabilities side this is mainly due to increases in current and other accounts and fixed deposits of £8,206,713 and £2,045,669 respectively, while loans payable and acceptances on account of customers also show substantial increases. On the assets side cash in hand and at bankers shows a decrease of £3,644,959 at £19,465,636, the ratio to our call liabilities being 17.40 per cent. This decrease is in some part offset by an increase in Government and other securities of £1,581,848 at £58,576,627. Advances to customers and other accounts show an increase of £13,587,550, which is an interesting commentary on the need for money in all parts of the world. The figure for balance of remittances, drafts, etc., in transit shows a decrease of £214,103. Bank premises and furniture show a net increase of £195,465, due not only to purchases of house property for our staff but also to initial expenditure in connection with the enlargement of our office at Singapore.

The profits, after providing for taxation and after making allocations to contingency accounts, out of which accounts full provision has been made for doubtful debts, are £467,111, an increase over those of last year of £19,053. Once again we have experienced higher working costs in all parts of the world, but these have been more than offset by the increase in our business.

An interim dividend of 6 p.c. less income tax was paid in October last, and we propose to pay a final dividend of 6 p.c., less income tax, making the annual distribution 12 p.c. We now know the full position of our war-time liabilities, although at the end of the year, in one or two places, the laws governing the position had not been finally enacted. The provisions made to cover these special war-time losses proved adequate, fully justifying the increase in the annual dividend for 1947 and permitting its continuance for 1948.

Your directors again recommend that £100,000 be set aside for the pension fund. Many of our senior staff who willingly carried on during the difficult reconstruction period, after a gruelling time during the war, have now retired. We also recommend an increase in the allocation to the widows' and orphans' fund from £10,000 to £15,000. Last year £125,000 was allocated to premises account and we think it wise to increase the figure to £150,000 this year.

The year 1948 has been no less momentous than 1947 in the history of many of the countries in which the bank operates. Unquestionably the greatest achievement in the political sphere in India, following the attainment of independence, has been the notable progress toward the unification of the country by the grouping of many of the Indian States within the Dominion on lines which promise progressively co-ordinated representative Government.

with it. And this should mean an enormous liberation for him, for he can then cut out the unfortunate narrator whose job is to announce the stage directions, and who inevitably, even when as discreet as Mr. Duncan Carse was the other evening, breaks the rhythm of the play and ruins the dramatic illusion. A narrator may be necessary when the producer's intention is to popularise Shakespeare, though here, I fancy, scenes from the play within a spoken exposition would usually be more effective than a straight broadcast of the whole work.

Mr. Sackville West's *Incognito*, in the *Imaginary Conversations* series, was in the nature of a prelude to the forthcoming Goethe bicentenary celebrations. Beautifully written, exciting in content and technically interesting, it was a most impressive programme. Listening to it, one felt brought very near to Goethe, for it conveyed admirably the poet's intellectual massiveness.

It appears from a shoal of postcards, written in what I shall be careful in future to call North-country dialect, that I recently insulted all Yorkshire. My apologies, therefore, both to Mr. Wilfred Pickles and Yorkshire. Mr. Pickles—my authority is *The Radio Times*—was born at Halifax and has his home at—Manchester.

WILLIAM SALTER

THE GALLERIES

THIRTY new paintings by Mr. Ivon Hitchens, now occupying two rooms at the Leicester Galleries, confirm the view that he is among the best five or six British painters now living. What is unique about his work is the way it combines many of the virtues of abstract painting with a representation of landscape. Hitchens has discovered a "pictorial equivalent" for a silver-birch copse or willow-fringed millpond which sacrifices nothing of the traditional English landscapist's love of place. We are put in touch with the Sussex pool or stream, and informed, for instance, about its reflected lights, *at the same instant* that we also enjoy an abstract visual harmony of real distinction. A flat scribble in a dull olive mixture, with a ragged edge that bites beautifully against the white ground: a single slash, very smooth by contrast, of ceruleum: some little leaf-shaped flicks of cadmium yellow: a huge blob of deep rust-red, made by a single stab with a large brush—such are the "abstract" units employed. They are not unrelated to the brush-work on the best Sung pots. Above all, Hitchens is remarkable for the exquisite quality of his paint. Whether it is applied in thin transparent washes on a white ground, or is scrubbed with rhythmic strokes, in a thicker paste, his colour has qualities shared only by Matisse—the quality of flat but glowing washes is pre-eminent among them. Sometimes, however, the more sumptuous elements of his design seem to get on top: then what is essentially a calligraphic touch tends to degenerate into flourish. Or perhaps the tension between the concrete subject and the abstract design may be relaxed: in number 9, *Shrouded Water No.* 1, a weight of abstract brushwork rather obscures the trees and pool. But some of these pictures are brilliantly successful: number 11, for instance, *Westwood No.* 2. Other outstanding things are *Red Boat, Autumn Trees with a Distant Hill, Violet and Yellow, Bracken Walk No.* 2. A slighter but a flawless work is number 8, *Blue Fir Tree.*

Raoul Dufy, now over seventy, is still going strong: that is the message conveyed to visitors to his exhibition at the Hanover Gallery. Matisse has been accused of a hedonistic approach to painting: but, of course, by comparison with Dufy, Matisse is a metaphysical. However, it is easy to dismiss this brilliant designer as a mere reporter: a fashionable "journalist of the brush": an aesthetic reveller who has little more to communicate than the intense pleasure he takes in the application of subtle and seductive colour-washes. There is this side to it all. But the skill and artistry involved are perhaps too easily overlooked. If a thing is clearly without a grain of serious poetry; if it springs merely from delight—and lighthearted delight at that—in the visual scene, whether on the Côte d'Azur or at Ascot, then it is likely to be belittled here. Virtues of rendering will go unnoticed. Dufy is not only a fine manipulator of abstract washes of colour: he is also a wit. He once painted the Changing of the Guard at St. James's on a wet day (the picture is in this show): nothing but bright reds—the Guardsmen and the houses—and bright blues—the lowering sky and the wet tarmac. Another painting in debonair greys, with the faintest touches of pale pink and blue, recorded the same scene—"on a fine day."

Upstairs at this gallery are paintings by Isabel Lambert. "Pigeon-holed skeletons" are the suggestion she makes: bird and fish skeletons seem to be imprisoned in glass boxes. But these luminous cubes may only be devices of her design—a way of making her umber birds and fish come to terms with the picture frame. Her way of putting on the paint suggests that she knows a thing or two about the medium: but she is "efficient" in the way too many younger members of the present-day School of Paris are. It is a pity she is struck so exclusively, with these bird and fish bones. Something of interest might occur if she tackled a more sensible subject.

Finally, I commend two exhibitions which space prevents me from reviewing at greater length this week. First, at the St. Georges Gallery a retrospective display of oils, gouaches and drawings by the late Frances Hodgkins which contains a number of very fine pictures. And secondly, at the Paul Alexander Gallery, Kensington Church St., the first exhibition of paintings by another woman artist. Though still very young, Miss Robin Mackertich shows that she has genuine points of contact with Christopher Wood and Utrillo: more propitious still is her handling of her own imaginative themes. Her rendering itself is both sensitive and daring.

PATRICK HERON

"Pitfall," at the London Pavilion

Where murder is concerned the screen fashion of the moment is decidedly moral. Murder, we are warned, doesn't pay. Probably not; but one could wish sometimes that these new educators, who return again and again fascinated to this discovery, could find livelier ways of expounding it. The shadow of the moral casts its gloom over *Pitfall*, a more than averagely well-made film, from the beginning. Here is an ordinary little insurance man, Mr. Dick Powell, comfortably settled with wife and child, who lapses into what would be an adventure if it were not conducted like a visit to the dentist. He meets on his investigations husky Miss Lizabeth Scott, responsive in a sweater, with her boy away behind bars. The primrose path offers them prickly pear. Painfully they amble about her flat; they seek out favourite dim cocktail spots for the afternoons. But do they have fun? Not noticeably. Then the hideousness of their offence begins to overtake them. A mountainous private detective, also none too happily attracted, comes to squat on her doorstep; so Miss Scott shoots him. Mr. Powell shoots the boy who has been let out of gaol. This is where you land—it is weightily suggested—if you mix pleasure with insurance; and sadder-looking than ever, after a successful plea of self-defence, Mr. Powell goes home to be hen-pecked for his sins. Serve him right, we may feel. And serve *us* right too, because all along we have been trying to have it both ways, to enjoy a murder thriller and pull a long face over it at the same time.

HALIFAX

BUILDING SOCIETY

Extracts from the Statement of Accounts, 31st January, 1949

TOTAL ASSETS	£148,228,331
SHARE & DEPOSIT FUNDS	£139,016,457
MORTGAGES	£103,880,908
TRUSTEE SECURITIES & CASH	£43,835,650
RESERVES	£8,839,136

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"Coppèlia," at Covent Garden

Danilova and Frederick Franklin have returned to Covent Garden as guest artists for a month. After the indifference of most imported dancing Danilova reminds us not only how good ballet can still be, but also how good the good old days must have been. Little changed by a long stay in America, this great dancer, once a member of Diaghilev's company, is almost as miraculous as ever. All the qualities of the Russian tradition are to be seen in her dancing: above all style. Other dancers of an equal technical brilliance can be boring, she never. Her technique has been entirely assimilated; she appears almost to disregard it, to give fastidious concentration instead to the artistry of each magnificent movement. Yet with all this classic brilliance and crispness, she remains a romantic. Besides, she is a *prima ballerina*—a star. In these days of pert, utility dancers, star quality is slightly suspect. But what other quality will light up a theatre as brightly? Franklin—it is a pleasure to see him in London—used to be overshadowed by Dolin, on whom he modelled himself. Now he has developed into a real *danseur noble*, virile yet light, and with the sort of charm that can captivate an audience without having to play up to it. Helpmann's remarkable characterisation of Dr. Coppèlius is spoilt by those touches of vulgarity which stop him being a great master. The *corps de ballet* celebrated the occasion with some well concerted work.

"Dark of the Moon," at the Lyric, Hammersmith

This piece is drawing the crowds to Hammersmith with a highly coloured mixture: fog in the mountains, moonlight and witches, earthly simplicity and the Blood of the Lamb. A fake folk-tale set in the Smoky Mountains, it is a non-musical first cousin to *Oklahoma* whose strength lies entirely in its framework of vigorous high spirited crowd scenes—the village dance—the wedding in the general store of Buck Creek—the really brilliant revivalist meeting with music by Moody and Sankey and words via Vachell Lindsey. The fable is taken from the ballad of Barbara Allen where a witch-boy from the mountains comes down to the plain to be a human for a year. This would be strong stuff for a "musical," but here it is taken straight; and this is rather like asking us to listen to the words of some current hill-billy hit without the palliative of a "good tune." The great weakness—a characteristic of this new American style—is the abysmal feebleness of the humour. The star is the producer (Peter Brooke), who conducts the ensemble with perfect timing, grouping and pace. His only failure is his witches who seem to have taken a sixpenny bus ride down from the Windmill.

Correspondence

NATIVE CONDITIONS IN S. AFRICA

SIR,—Your correspondent, Thelma Geldenhuys, is entitled to her opinion about the policy of the Colonial Office, although I am told that the African representatives in Northern Rhodesia voted in favour of remaining under the Colonial Office since they feared White settler domination and the loss of their rights in land under the proposed Dominion status, such as they have suffered in South Africa. But a word about the two places, Tobruk and Bethal, which your contributor, Freda White, in her "ignorance about the Commonwealth" confused with one another.

"Tobruk" was a vast slum camp in which forty thousand Africans lived like outlaws on the hills around Johannesburg. "Pari delicti" was the phrase used by the Chief Native Commissioner and the Municipality to describe them, and so disclaim responsibility. Their shanties were made of sackcloth and old tin cans, and they set up their own "police force," "magistrates' courts," a "nursing service" and a "burial club." They named the place Tobruk, in the whimsical way Africans have, after the desert camp up North where they had fought in the White man's war for freedom. I lived in the place for four months and took a film of the conditions there, which anyone can see who doubts whether it was a fight for life or not. We buried their babies in packing cases; a Zulu pastor and I took them away on the rubbish carts. When finally a force of a thousand armed police captured the place one morning as the smoky mists cleared, I could still hear some of them singing their little rhythmic song in their whimsical African way. "Tobruk shall never fall."

Bethal, on the other hand, was named by highly respectable Calvinists after the "abode of God," the place where Jacob dreamed there was a ladder stretching from earth to heaven. And it was here that the allegations about "near slavery" conditions were first made—not in the first instance in my memorandum published in the *Rand Daily Mail*. But let us not make a religious or racial controversy of the matter. It will really not help anyone in this crisis of our history to speculate on whether the race prejudice of the "jingoes of Natal" is equal to the race prejudice of the "Afrikaners of the back veld" or even to that of the "mining and financial houses in London." Isn't what we need a strong bond of brotherhood amongst people of all races who are prepared to stand firm on their principles and resist the evils of race passion and doctrinaire politics and unjust laws in the spirit of non-violent resistance?

It was, in fact, an Afrikaner who first called public attention to some of the conditions at Bethal, namely, Mr. Justice Maritz in 1944. It was again some three years after a strongly worded resolution by the Synod of the Anglican Church that remarks were made by the Afrikaner prosecutor and Magistrate of Bethal and published in the local Bethal paper, *De Echo*, on the prevalence of brutal assault cases on Non-Europeans and conditions "reminiscent of slavery."

"Of the assaults that came before the Courts . . . the majority were wholly unjustified and the Magistrate found himself in the position of having to punish the accused in a manner to stop others from committing such offences. There was also that very serious problem of assaults by employers on employees and of Europeans on Non-Europeans which was involved in these cases. Europeans because they were better educated should set an example. Instead they continually had sjamboks with them, if they carried sjamboks they got into the habit of using them and when they lost their tempers they used them indiscriminately and without justice, they punished excessively and without care, and the time might come when such punishment would lead to loss of life and to the most serious consequences for the assailant."

In another case in the Bethal court the prosecutor, Mr. Holtshausen, remarked:

"The colour question in the Union had reached a serious stage and conduct such as disclosed in the recent case served to aggravate it. The farmers could not obtain sufficient labour at present . . . I had seriously thought of asking the court to impose a sentence of imprisonment in this case but I will not do so now. I should like the court to issue a severe warning, however, that if these practices continue farmers who are found guilty will be sent to prison and if this does not help I will ask that lashes be imposed."

"I endorse the remarks of the prosecutor," the magistrate said. "The number of assaults in the district has been prolific . . . You, as a European, are supposed to be of a superior race because you have had an education of which the Native has not had the benefit, but to act as you did is disgusting. The whole affair is sordid and your part in it was despicable. It is reminiscent of slavery."

Many of the Africans concerned had been recruited as indentured labourers from some of our Mission districts in Central Africa and the correspondence in the case would be open to any competent inquirer.

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Screenplay by MAXWELL ANDERSON and ANDREW SOLT Art Direction by
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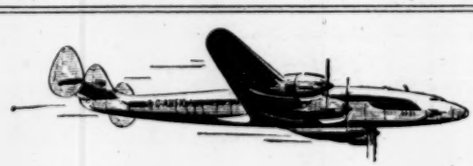

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It now appears that the labour shortage at Bethal is being met by drafting "convict" labour to the farms, the "convicts" being unfortunate Africans who have been caught in the meshes of complicated Pass Law restrictions and the Master and Servants' contract laws.

In the fight against injustice in South Africa there is need for a strong fellowship of people of good-will whose task it will be to lay the foundation of more expansive economy and the liberation of our human and material resources.

32 Tavistock Square, W.C.1. MICHAEL SCOTT

TEACHERS' PAY

SIR,—In your comment on Salaries in the issue of March 5th, you refer to "the dissatisfaction among the higher ranges of Schoolmastering."

It cannot be too clearly emphasised that the dissatisfaction among graduate teachers is very real and justified. Increases in salaries have been made or are proposed for the medical, dental and administrative staffs of the Education service and for higher civil service officials. These professions are filled by men and women of graduate qualifications similar to those of the graduate teacher, but their salaries are on a much higher level.

This Association puts forward the claim of its graduates for a professional salary as an immediate necessity. Is it generally recognised that a graduate teacher receives £30 per annum for the doubtful distinction of possessing a University Degree; that the school dentist's minimum salary is considerably above the maximum for a graduate teacher of 20 years service; that the proposed scale for a police constable is more than the minimum of a four-year trained graduate who enters the "profession"?

We are profoundly concerned at the inevitable effects of this underpayment. The standards of scholarship in the grammar schools must suffer and the quality of future entrants to the Universities and the professions will deteriorate. Well qualified graduates are drifting from the profession to take posts in other spheres where their quality and qualifications are properly appreciated.

Our claim for a *professional* graduate salary scale for teachers cannot be ignored.

Graduate Teachers Association,
Abbey House, S.W.1. E. T. HIRONS, *President*.

EQUALITY OF INCOMES

SIR,—In your last issue you applaud the Government's achievement in creating "a new approach to equality in the distribution of spendable incomes." Can it be gainsaid that the process of income-equalisation is still largely nullified by the unequal distribution of capital?

Taxation has indeed deprived the professional worker of most of those marginal earnings which formerly financed, for better or worse, certain middle-class standards of comfort, leisure and culture; by-and-large he is not a man of property. But a high level of expenditure—often in directions of more questionable social advantage—can be maintained by those who own large accretions of capital which can be drawn on for "spendable income." After all, it takes a long time to eat up £100,000.

If this "new approach" is to be genuinely realised, there will have to be a drastic increase in Death Duties.

London, S.W.3. J. A. PLAYFAIR

LALLANS

SIR,—Your correspondent, Alec S. Gillan, who tries to write off the Lallans poets as so many archaistic footlers, has missed the point of Neil McCallum's article by a long Scots mile.

He seems to imagine that the twenty-odd writers now using the Scots tongue for poetry are all abject dictionary dredgers who fear the use of English would show up the mediocrity of their work. Has it never occurred to him that a Scots poet may still find the speech of Dunbar and Burns his natural vehicle for self-expression?

Mr. Gillan wants to know in what way certain Scots words are superior to current English. This merely shows he knows nothing about the nature of language. He might as well ask in what way "tramonto" or "Sonnenuntergang" are superior to current English. They are not superior; they are merely different. I doubt whether the obliteration of these differences would be to the benefit of European culture.

When he tries to equate words like "trauchle" with phrases from the *Seafarer* Mr. Gillan is only making himself ridiculous. "Trauchle" is a word still in common use all over Lallan Scotland, especially in such phrases as "I'm sair trauchelt."

One must admit, of course, that a couple of the "Lallans Makars" have laid themselves wide open to the charge of archaism. Maurice Lindsay, for example, has been the father of some really choice follies. But this is emphatically not true of the great majority of younger Scottish poets.

Glasgow. HAMISH HENDERSON

SIR,—Your correspondent, Alec S. Gillan, seems strangely misinformed on the subject of Lallans. He states that "the Anglian dialect spoken by the Lowland Scots is English," and refers, inaccurately, to the "West Saxon dialect spoken South of the Humber." (I had always understood that standard Southern English is based upon the East Midland dialect of Middle English, which has closer affinities with Mercian than with West Saxon.)

It is true that about A.D. 1200 there was substantially little difference between the language of Northern England and that of Southern Scotland, but various circumstances, chiefly the Wars of Independence, sundered the two peoples, so that what was originally a dialect of English became in Scotland an independent literary language. Borrowings from a number of sources, including Gaelic, French and Latin, further enriched Scottish speech and accentuated the difference, so that the language of Dunbar and Gawain Douglas was not at all that used by their English contemporaries.

Mr. Gillan's contention that the natural and obvious mode of expression of a Scottish poet is standard English is not borne out by fact. Our best poets have been happiest when employing Scots as their medium; I need only indicate Burns and MacDiarmid as examples. Their work in English has none of the intensity, fire and artistic effectiveness of "Tam o' Shanter" or the lyrics in "Sangschaw." Virginia Woolf made much the same point about Scott in her essay "Gas at Abbotsford."

Glasgow. MUNGO MACALPINE

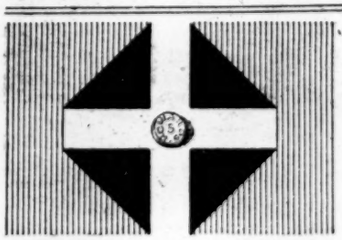
THE TEL-AVIV MUSEUM

SIR,—It is gratifying to learn that, in the first consideration of the reconstruction plans of the new State of Israel, problems of education and culture are given special prominence.

The Tel-Aviv Museum of Fine Arts, which is to be the National Gallery of Israel, is already in possession of the nucleus of a collection of European Art unique in the Middle East, and a Society of Friends of the Tel-Aviv Museum has been formed in this country to help in its expansion by the presentation of representative works of Art of all schools and periods.

During the war, the British Council exhibition of modern British painting aroused marked enthusiasm when shown in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and Haifa, especially among the younger Jewish painters, and an exhibition of water-colours and drawings, by British artists of all periods drew attention to an aspect of British Art less known abroad than it deserves. The Society hopes to present characteristic examples of contemporary work and such specimens as may be available of earlier Masters to this young National Gallery.

Offers of gifts of works of Art and donations to the Society will be gladly received by the Honorary Treasurer, Mr. Alexander Marguiles, c/o 72, New



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It is hoped, in the near future, to hold an exhibition in London of the Society's acquisitions before their despatch to Tel-Aviv. Among the present acquisitions are works by Epstein, Augustus John, P. Wilson Steer, Henry Moore, Mark Gertler, Graham Sutherland and Wyndham Lewis.

FARINGDON
HOLDEN
PATRICK ABERCROMBIE
MICHAEL BALCON

QUAKER MIRACLES

SIR,—In reviewing *George Fox's Book of Miracles*, Mr. Trevor-Roper has submitted the Society of Friends to searching criticism which is much to be preferred to the half-sincere flattery we sometimes meet ("If I were a Christian, I would be a Quaker," etc.). But his analysis of Quaker history is not acceptable.

Mr. Trevor-Roper tells us that the Society was founded twice; once by George Fox, and a second time by William Penn. Before 1660, we were crazy; after 1660, respectable and even genteel ("a religion which fashionable courtiers could respect and blue-stocking peeresses embrace"). Now Fox died in 1691, and Penn was paralysed in 1710 and died in 1718. So when did this mysterious second foundation take place?

In the interests of snobbery let us say that Quakerism had genteel connections from the first (Cromwell's favourite daughter, Lady Claypole; Descartes' friend, Princess Elizabeth of the Palatinate and others). The high-born adherents, however, could be quite as crazy as the rest. The two first Quakers to reach Oxford (in 1655) were "two Inocent, Comely yonge maids": Elizabeth Fletcher "of a Considerable family in the world" and Elizabeth Levens "of the lower ranke in the world, yet endowed with many spiritual gifts and graces." It was the high-born Elizabeth Fletcher who went naked through the city for a sign, and was put under the pump and cast down on a gravestone by the undergraduates "so that she never recovered of it."

On the other hand, we didn't give up being crazy in 1660; we have been a little crazy ever since. Wasn't it crazy of Elizabeth Fry, with eight children at home (as her critics reminded her) to get herself locked in Newgate Gaol, that "den of wild beasts"? Wasn't it crazy of John Woolman to go unarmed among Redskins who were on the war-path, scalping and disembowelling any Whites they could catch (1763)? Weren't William and Esther Tuke crazy, when they opened York Retreat in 1796, to begin by taking in a violent lunatic of "Herculean size," removing the chains which held him night and day, and *never putting them back again*?

Mr. Trevor-Roper dismisses the details of the Quaker miracles as unimportant. Perhaps Blake's comment is relevant: "the man who holds miracles to be ceased puts it out of his own power ever to witness one." ORMEROD GREENWOOD

11 Clifton Hill, N.W.8.

MALARIAL MOSQUITOES

SIR,—My attention has just been drawn to an article by Mr. Ritchie Calder, "Science Out of Step," in your issue of February 5th. Gratifying though it is to find the anti-mosquito work being done in British Guiana so favourably commented upon by your contributor, I must point out that the statistics given require qualification.

The statement "Within eighteen months of the campaign starting, the birth rate had doubled and the infantile mortality had dropped from over three hundred and fifty per thousand to sixty-seven per thousand" applies strictly to only the principal settlement in which the initial trials with D.D.T. insecticide were staged. On grounds of size alone this settlement is hardly representative of British Guiana generally; its estimated population in 1947 was three thousand one hundred and four as compared with a colony total approaching four hundred thousand. Perhaps more important is the fact that this settlement is sited in an area with a history of high malaria endemicity.

In consequence, its vital statistical rates show a much more dramatic improvement than could be expected from the substantial areas elsewhere in the colony with either no malaria problem at all or one of relatively minor dimensions.

Again, the statement: "The population is now increasing by ten per cent. annually" is true only of particular settlements in areas suffering maximal malaria incidence formerly. Population trends for the Colony generally have been authoritatively discussed in the recently published Colonial Office *Report of the British Guiana and British Honduras Settlement Commission, Cmd.* 7533, and point to a probable annual increase of little more than one quarter the rate quoted above. However, even this more modest estimate represents an anticipated doubling of the total population in little more than thirty years, and is an advance which I hope Mr. Calder would still be prepared to class as "commendable."

Certainly, in British Guiana itself, all sections of the community appear to have discerned very tangible benefits in the D.D.T. application of our new scientific knowledge judged by the sustained and enthusiastic co-operation given by the public so far to the campaign work of its Government's Mosquito Control Service. L. G. EDDEY,

Director of Medical Services

British Guiana.

FULL-TIME SPECIALISTS

SIR,—We write to express our agreement with the article by "Medicus" on the remuneration of full-time and part-time specialists. The Labour movement should realise that an opportunity for carrying out the Party's programme for a full-time salaried service, in one part at least of the National Health Service, is being thrown away. The result of the pressure for a part-time specialist service will be an increase in the cost of this service with a decrease in efficiency.

The present proposals show a lack of consideration for the full-time specialists, on whom the specialist service largely depends, and for the public, for whom the service is provided.

SOMERVILLE HASTINGS, *President*
D. E. BUNBURY, *Hon. Secretary*

Socialist Medical Association.

THE FAULT OF THE DUTCH

SIR,—In your issue of 5th March you printed a cable from me—"The Fault of the Dutch." In my cable I wrote, "the Dutch high official I saw, shortly after his return from the Hague, . . . " This has somehow been transposed to "I saw Dr. Beel shortly after his return from The Hague. . . " The Dutch high official to whom I referred was *not* Dr. Beel; and, to avoid misunderstandings (of which there are quite enough in Indonesia already) I should like to make this clear. WOODROW WYATT

EGON KISCH

SIR,—The widow of Egon Erwin Kisch has asked me to collect letters, memoirs, MS, etc., of her husband, in this country. I wonder if any of your readers who have such material in their possession would be so kind and send it to the above address? I would of course return it to them within a few days.

Highland View, S. LOEFFLER
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BOOKS IN GENERAL

SHADES of the Looney Bin begin to close upon the growing boy; private life means private madness. Such is the drift of humour in our generation; a funny man is one who has something on his mind and his object is to find the breaking point, the point at which his victims will "go over," slide into melancholia, lose their memories, melt into the general emotional condition of the block voter or the amoeba. Or become a special case like Mr. Thurber's Dr. Ponsonby who believed himself to be married to a South American butterfly. The change is a large one. A glance from early American practitioners like Mark Twain or Artemus Ward, to a contemporary figure like Thurber,* indicates how large it is. In the elder generation, extraverted Yankees might rock the court of King Arthur, or dose a jumping frog with an ounce of lead shot; a high cheese, a resounding mother-in-law, a set of false teeth, a few false prospectuses, a corpse or two and a duke, and the funny man drove steaming up and down the main line. Now he has got himself shunted up a siding, stuck against the buffers with the fire out. He has gone home, "driven into himself."

And there he finds himself in a disturbed world. Outwardly all is normal. The radio is full on, the Sunday supplements are all over the floor, the children are shouting down their parents, the wide-mouthed neighbours have called. The wife who used to play Rosalind now looks like a potato even to the very eyes. It is all normal to the point of normalcy (the funny man must reflect), as the soap opera dribbles out a programme which is never "unnetwork," which is never "unfair to anti-Semitism" and which maintains without a single side-slip, the radio ideals of respect for Motherhood, Blessed Regularity and Personal Daintiness. And yet (as the funny man introduces his second wife to the visitors), up there is the first wife crawling on all fours on top of the bookcase, somewhere between nude and naked, too warm to be called dead, too dry to be called a baigneuse, too cross-eyed to be a vase—an omen and a figment. At night, when he goes to bed, there will be the usual argument about whether a seal is or is not barking at the top of the bed. Experience tells him that if a woman says she sees rabbit's ears growing out of her doctor's head, the rabbit's ears will be there. The Thurber character lives in a world dangerous to research workers. A slack and torpid place—New York in August—it is liable on the one hand to controversy of high alcohol-content, about the distances that homing dogs can travel; and on the other, to rhetorical questions which freeze the march of time itself. Questions like "Where did you get those large brown eyes and that tiny little mind?" Or statements, shot through a pair of pince-nez over the back of a dog to a lap full of knitting on the other side of a standard lamp: "Sometimes the news from Washington forces me to the conclusion that your mother and brother Ed are in charge."

The funny man does not stand out bottle-nosed among the rest of the community. He is no longer the frisking extortionist of laughter; he has surrendered. He is the weevil of modern life, who looks like the meal he lives in and is as dry. One can claim to see him in Thurber's version of Henry James:

> In this darkling shining, the unfamiliar hall way, our poor brave gentleman, a moment later, found himself, for all his giving up to it, for all his in point of fact, "sailing" into it, reaching out, as for an arm relinquished. "Let me"; it was as though she softly unwrapped it for him, "save you." It needed nothing more to bring him out of it, to bring him indeed, whole, so to say, hog, into it. "Lose me!" he fairly threw it at her. "Lose me." And managing the bravest of waves, he magnificently set his face to his prefigured predicament."

Lose me in my prefigured predicament (he seems to say) let me drool and doodle as I look with aching eyes through the carbon dioxide of the Sunday bedroom at the cremated remains of tobacco in the slopped saucer; as the feeble daylight glimmers like mineral water through the curtains and the dreadful bed clothes drag down one side to the floor. Sooner or later (he seems to say) the O'Henry society will issue souvenir blotters; and if they don't, I have been so conditioned, that I shall nag them till they do. Presently a friend will call and after a few drinks he will tell me there are "actually five tigers in the first two lines of 'Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright'; that is the necessary letters are repeated often enough to spell the word five times, three times in addition to 'tiger, tiger,' with a couple of t's and an i left over." Maybe I shall turn up, some day, as a bookend in Brentano's window, a prop to living writers. Living with Ann has done this to me, but living with Lydia has done it to Stanton; before the evening is out we are back at Early Woman and Early Man:

> Lydia laughed harshly "'Imitation of Chevalier!' I thought I would *scream*. I really thought I would *scream*."
>
> "What was that?" Stanton asked.
>
> "Oh you didn't get it, of course sitting there with your eyes closed, a million miles away. You didn't say one word, one single, solitary word from ten o'clock until we left except 'Lydia, dear—Lydia, dear—Lydia, dear' until I thought I would go *out* of my mind."
>
> "Aw," Stanton said.
>
> "Anyway," Stanton said, "you were wonderful. You make Ann look like an amateur. You were marvellous."
>
> She sighed a hopeless little sigh, "Well, you either have talent, Fred or you haven't."

And now we take you over to Thorne and Ann:

> "Does he know *any*thing? Has he got a brain in his head? she demanded.
>
> "Fred? God, no!"
>
> "If he'd only yawn and get it over with, instead of working his mouth that way."
>
> Halfway up the stairs, Ann turned suddenly. Thorne stopped and looked up at her. "Do you know the most ghastly thing about her?" she asked.
>
> "That moo-cow voice?"
>
> "No, Heavens knows that's bad enough, but can you possibly imagine her in doublet and *hose*. Those *legs*, George, those *legs*!"

The funny man always had a predicament. What has made him concentrate now on the breaking point, is the suspicion that the predicament is more than pre-figured; it is prefabricated.

The text of *The Beast in Me* is milder than *My Life and Hard Times*, *Is Sex Necessary?* or other contributions by Mr. Thurber to the Looney Bin. He is settling down to a restful middle age as a documentary writer and naturalist and there are signs, in his writing—as there are in *The New Yorker* itself—of a reconciliation with life and a drying up of autobiography. The weevil no longer despairs of being like the oatmeal. The definitive study of the soap operas—one would sooner have had the full story of what happened when Ezra Adams of Clinton, Iowa, smashed his radio—and the kind inquiry into the life of the Domestic Cricket have charm, but I shall hate it if Kinsey becomes Mr. Thurber's second name. Of course he is pellucid and he can write prose; in a way, it is funny to read him without laughing—one did the same for Leacock who could not write prose—without complaint for years. One knows that longing not to be common any more, that desire for a serious interest, which visits the pillow of the clown every night. Thurber's humour has always depended upon the sudden skid in the discreet sentence. His skill lay in protracting the normal, but in weakening it slyly as he went along, until the boards gave way at the right moment. For this to succeed it was indispensable that he wrote in the first person; the moment he changed down into third he began to chug and labour and lose his lightness. So the short stories in this book fail and things like the Literary Pilgrimage succeed:

> Rule X. If on your arrival, the door is opened by a member of the literary figure's household who says that the Master will not be able to see you for forty-eight hours, do not hang round the house or the neighbourhood. Go away.
>
> Rule XI. If, in such a case, you do go away, do not leave behind for the distinguished writer to read, a thousand word note written in longhand and beginning, "in 1908 when my brother-in-law was an oiler on a Danish cattle boat, he found one of your . . . etc." Don't leave any note at all. Just go away.
>
> Rule XII. And stay away.

That is passable Thurber; it might also be genuine antique Leacock. The true Thurber is what is left when the literary tide has gone out: the Thurber of the animal drawings, after the human beings, animals in a beatitude of dumbness have been dropped. Here the tradition of Lear is graciously revived: the gentle lemur, the duck-billed platypus, the Tasmanian Devil, in their thoughtful lines suggest a lyrical alternative to the unexercised human beings who sit like unamiable slugs on the future atomic dump. If Bosman's Potto, the Common Shrew or the Lapp Owl, suggest a dear friend, they also suggest some inviolable kink to which that friend must unavailingly aspire, the superiority of the ape to the essence. Fauna and flora have brought a solace and pensiveness to Thurber. Safe from the nib-sharp eyes—too high in the head—of the American Momma, the *New Yorker's* old enemy, he can toy with the Hopeless Quandary, the White-faced Rage (left) and the Blind Rage; the Goad squared-jawed and bludgeon-lidded under the convolvulus; the Garble with an Utter in its claws. He can even peep out of hiding and catch that old, sad, human memory: the Male Wedlock (left) cautiously approaching a clump of Devil-May-Care; at right, the female. The delicacy, the vacancy, the airiness of these drawings without innocence aerate a book that otherwise would remind us of the pressure upon the American clown, who can still be used after he is broken. In this civilisation he does not have to go on being funny; the conditioned audience will laugh all the same. That does not affect Thurber seriously; like Lear he has found a way out. As long as he believes in the sex war and the lesser mammals, he is safe.

V. S. PRITCHETT.

* *The Beast in Me.* By JAMES THURBER. *Hamish Hamilton*, 12*s* 6*d*.

THE GOOD GIANT

The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. By JOHN DICKSON CARR. *John Murray.* 18*s*.

Biographers, like everybody else, have to make the choice between good and evil and one can hardly be surprised at their undoubted preference for the exposing of feet of clay. Goodness is dull. As a general rule, the saintlier the Bishop the louder the yawns, and the blameless person of rank fights a losing battle, on the printed page, with the eminent cloven hoof.

There is, however, nothing in the least dull about Mr. John Dickson Carr's *Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* and the reason lies in the immense vigour with which this most amiable man set about getting through his three score years and eleven. His goodness was of a violent and active nature. Stevenson spoke of his "white plume" and, with this flying, the massive knight errant charged to the defence of the wronged and oppressed. The creator of Sherlock (he was first called Sherrinford) Holmes immediately smelt falseness and injustice in the convictions of Oscar Slater (for the murder of Miss Gilchrist) and George Edalji (animal mutilation). He wrote 60,000 words attacking the shocking treatment of the natives in the Belgian Congo. He scattered cheques ("let me be your banker") on those who needed them. His purse was ever open and his pen busy: the Army must be more efficient, British athletes must be better trained, bogus tuberculosis cures must be shown up, the Divorce laws must be reformed ("The foundation of national life is not the family. It is the happy family"). He even found time to come to the rescue of a distracted nurse and Nelson's old flagship *Foudroyant*, deducing for the former the whereabouts of her elusive and unsatisfactory Danish fiancé, and attempting to save the latter from the ignominy of a German scrap-yard.

"There was never," Mr. Dickson Carr

observes, "a more typical Englishman than this Irishman." He boxed, he skied, he shot, he motored, he played cricket at Lord's: he manoeuvred his six foot two inches and his fifteen stone expertly through both kinds of football ("one of the safest Association backs in Hampshire"). He played the Bombardon horn ("splendid work for the chest".) He went on a whaling cruise to the Arctic and blacked the steward's eye. He went on a cruise to West Africa and was nearly eaten by a shark. He was a great lady's man (Miss Jeffers was "a little darling with an eye like a gimlet"). He went to a ball, proposed to some of his partners and "got one letter next day signed 'Ruby,' and saying the writer had said 'yes' when she meant 'no'." He travelled all over the world, he served as a doctor in the Boer War, he gave five hundred lectures, he stood twice for Parliament. He was knighted (genuinely against his will: "it is the Alfred Austin . . . type of man who takes rewards"). He was fêted and honoured and widely loved but success and riches made no difference. Lady Conan Doyle was only doing him justice when she caused the words "Steel true, blade straight" to be put upon his headstone.

The mass of papers, letters (especially a vast correspondence with his mother), and personal diaries to which Mr. Dickson Carr has had access enrich our knowledge of Holmes and his loyal and perplexed companion. Conan Doyle gives the credit for the inspiration of Holmes to his lecturer at Edinburgh, Dr. Joseph Bell, and to his illuminating deductions from the medical cases brought to him. The deductions in the Slater and Edalji cases make us suspect that the core of the character was altogether nearer home. Such indeed is the power and individuality of Holmes that it is easy to forget that he had a creator at all. The origin of Doctor Watson, in name at any rate, is not far to seek. Dr. Conan Doyle started practising on his own in Southsea ("keeping literature as my Milk-cow") and in the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society there was a doctor called James Watson. The Christian name was changed to John, but even Mary Morstan was absent-minded enough to refer, on occasion, to her husband as "James."

The famous pair gave their author little pleasure and not even Professor Moriarty came nearer to killing Holmes. Quite early in the series of stories we read of plans for "winding him up for good and all. He takes my mind from better things." Later, for further Holmes stories, he demanded sums so thumping that he thought no publisher would pay them. He was wrong, though the cost was ten shillings a word (*A Study in Scarlet* was originally bought for twenty-five pounds, and no royalties). The cynic may raise an eyebrow but there is evidence enough that the chivalrous writer had not the heart to disappoint his public (among them the young men who had gone into mourning after the tragedy at the Reichenbach falls). So Holmes was reluctantly resuscitated and lived triumphantly on, serving with credit in the First World War and, in *The Speckled Band*, taking to the stage. But the theatre, to which he devoted some time, with varying success (even collaborating with Barrie in a light opera at the Savoy), gave Conan Doyle no lasting satisfaction: "it's so absorbing that it draws your mind away from the deeper things of life."

The "better things" were his historical novels, *Micah Clark*, *The White Company* and *Sir Nigel*. The latter was "my absolute top," and to a favourite sister Lottie (working as a governess in Portugal, and evidently consoling herself for her brother's absence by living opposite a dynamite-factory) he wrote of *The White Company*, "the first half is very good, the second quarter pretty good and the last quarter very good again." But the hours of careful period study went for little and he was enraged when the stories were enjoyed more for their romantic qualities than for their painstaking historical accuracy. The "deeper things" were probably his crusading activities and the psychic studies and experiences in which he was engaged at the end of his life. It was characteristic of him that, when already ill, he should disregard his doctor's advice and go to London to interview the Home Secretary about the law affecting spiritualistic mediums.

The publisher has set a thief to catch a thief and Mr. Dickson Carr, as a writer of detective fiction (and an excellent one), has a tendency to over-dramatise his material. This we must forgive, for he has written with admiration and enthusiasm and has made worthy use of the fresh material available. The Good Giant (as the French called him) has emerged from the pages in all his honesty, vigour and brilliance, and the large-hearted man will forgive Posterity for preferring the hansoms and the fogs of Baker Street to all the plumes and trumpets of the "better things."

A unique honour was done to Holmes. One has not heard of copies of *Peter Pan* being supplied to recruits of the Royal Air Force, or Mr. Micawber's financial musings to the holders of Savings Bank accounts. But Sherlock Holmes's adventures were translated and issued to the Egyptian police-force as a textbook. One wonders what crushing retort would have cut short Doctor Watson's delighted outburst on hearing of this remarkable fact. ARTHUR MARSHALL

NEW NOVELS

Randle in Spring-time. GEOFFREY COTTERELL. *Eyre & Spottiswoode.* 9s.

The Overseer. PETER VANSITTART. *Chapman & Hall.* 10s. 6d.

My arm, half in the bath-water, had developed, apparently, a second joint, Picasso-like, between elbow and wrist, and was elegantly sheathed in a long, close-fitting glove of silvery blue knitted bubbles. A chic vision of Mannerist Morbidezza indeed. I decided that water, with its laws of light refraction and optical distortion, is like the climate—the lymph—of a novelist's mind. For the latter, also, has its own laws of refraction and distortion. *Or should have.* Not that they need be of the Cubist variety. (Although this week I think we do happen to have got something of that kind in Mr. Vansittart.) But first of all for Mr. Cotterell.

I used to marvel at my friend Mandragora Simpkin, a voracious reader of fiction, who, when asked what a novel was like, would rapidly reel off the bare bones of the plot.

("Stop! Stop! I want to know what *kind* of book it is, that's all!" "But I'm *telling* you!")

At the end she would abruptly sit back, happily satisfied to have explained so fully what kind of book it was! Since that day, however, I have read quite a number of modern novels myself, and I see only too well how that answer arises. The fact is that in the ordinary way there *is* no other possible answer. There is usually no artist's lymph, no principle of refraction. Only a plot—and a few characters thrown in amongst it. Take *Randle in Spring-time.* Randle, a one-time insurance clerk, is now, after the war, a lieutenant in the British Army of Occupation, stationed at Hamburg. There he mixes with people who in the normal way are high above him in wealth and social station, and he soon acquires a new, spacious and extremely excensive design for living, which, though temporarily realisable owing to the peculiar exchange facilities in Germany, he will plainly not be able to indulge once back again in the old life in London. It is easy to see then how, thrown into bad company, he starts negotiations on the Black Market, goes from strength to

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PUTNAM

strength, rapidly turning from a respectable suburban citizen to a professional swindler. And this is the story of Randle's temptation, of how he fell, and of how he righted himself again at the eleventh hour. What a good idea! Yes.

But unfortunately a good idea does not of itself make a good novel. In this case no amount of characters—frustrated spinsters, spivs, aristocrats, Machiavellian batmen (each one possessing a definite foible of his own and a *patois* so that you can tell him apart from the others)—and no amount of street scenes, parties, and pleasant social satire can mask the fact that there is no *awareness in depth*. In this novel the canvas is big, but the awareness of the universe is somehow a restricted and provincial area. And just *because* in this "competent 'professional' novel, efficient fuel for the lending libraries,"—as a colleague of this column puts it—just *because* the area of consciousness in this novel is no worse than the next book's (in fact it is better than most)—just because these books have fallen into a rut, we mean to wage war on it.

It's not that one is tired of being dished out stale cheese to eat; one quite enjoys it. But it is not nutritious! And we desperately need spiritual nourishment to build us up now, as never before. This is our credo then: that in the interests of civilisation (yes, that plea is not out of place) a novelist should labour to add his *personal quota of awareness of the laws of the universe*.

After all, here is Homo Sapiens, a drugged half-conscious fly, thrust into the very heart of a Gargantuan spider's web of dynamic tensions, all of them violently impelled to ease themselves, on him, through him, in spite of him. As well as the forces operating within him—the instincts, the inspirations, the moralities, and so on—there are all the physical forces outside him, the laws of gravity, the laws within laws of catabolism and metabolism, and Heaven knows what beside. All these forces are pushing against this fly's equilibrium. And the greater the artist the more these abstract forces inform the *apparent* subject matter of the artistic creation. The meaner the artist, the more he concentrates on the parochial details of his story and ignores the web of dynamic tension. All this is well known in painting. Why are Leonardo and Cezanne considered better painters than Frith? Literature is in this respect the same. Take an instance from a great writer at random: in chapter three of *War and Peace* the self-conscious beauty, Princess Ellen, is at a soirée listening to somebody telling a story. Tolstoy shows us her plump, bare arm on the table, "with its line changed by pressure on the table." A small point? I wonder! That observation was made by a man who thought in terms of dynamic pressures. It is no coincidence that this great writer did not disdain to record a small example of the laws of displacement in this way. Mr. Cotterell and his school would not get further than noticing that the lady was standing by, looking "slim, dark and calm" or "plump and small" or "dressed in a blue overcoat," or some other phrase that was generalised and static, instead of, as in Tolstoy, particularised and dynamic.

Again, the same complaint against the photographic, meaningless—because static—approach: when Mr. Cotterell's, or the "competent professional novelist's" characters have to go somewhere by car, the reader is treated to a list of the buildings that are passed in the street before reaching the intended destination, "at the top on the right was the Esplanade Hotel . . . a car stood parked in front . . . on the left the railway station," and in the middle was something else. But a journey in a novel is not a *real* journey! It is a transition from one state of awareness to the next. It must have emotional sweep. We are not reading Baedeker!

Mr. Vansittart, our other novelist this week, understands that sort of thing perfectly well. If he wants to describe a crowd of people leaving the drawing-room and going into another room for tea, he merely remarks, "The party dissolves like the blown petals of a flower and pushes hastily into the dining-room." Mr. Cotterell would have listed every footstool and vase ("a footstool," "a vase") that the company passed *en route*, and thus missed the *particular quality of that particular occasion*. But what we miss more than perhaps anything in this kind of book is that there are no undertones, no overtones, no hint that there is anything unintelligible or elusive behind what meets the eye.

Mr. Vansittart's novel is about Germany after the war also, but it is the 1914 war in his case. He paints a picture of the misery and strife amongst all classes and shows what a breeding ground was there for the new religion of Fascism. You may find the *Overseer* hard to read (as I did); you may not relish the expressionist flavour, reminiscent of Dr. Caligari; you may find the cubist refractive principle that operates in this author's mind stuns one with its clatter (as I did). But he does what few authors now bother to do, he experiences phenomena freshly, and has evolved a style that expresses this peculiar vision, and he deals with networks of forces and with dynamic tensions: furthermore, he is in possession of this secret of good writing: not to be bounderishly over-familiar with his subject, not to slap it cosily on the back and try to mouth its private *patois*, not to rub noses with it, but to stand back at a respectful distance from where it is possible to appreciate its anatomy, and the direction of its movement.

Il faut reculer pour mieux sauter.

JULIA STRACHEY

CLIMBERS

Kingdom of Adventure: Everest. By JAMES RAMSEY ULLMAN. *Collins.* 21*s.*

Alpine Tragedy. By CHARLES GOS, translated by MALCOLM BARNES. *Allen & Unwin.* 18*s.*

Kingdom of Adventure is a useful digest of many books, mostly out of print, describing the different Everest expeditions. Everest (29,002 feet above the sea) is still unconquered. The highest point reached, incidentally without oxygen, is 28,100 feet. As the differences of atmospheric pressure diminish rapidly per thousand feet with every thousand feet climbed, Everest is certainly climbable, but the odds are against any particular expedition finding that combination of circumstances necessary for success. Future expeditions will certainly drop supplies by parachute, and if ever the time comes when helicopters can function above their present limits (rather less than 15,000 feet above the sea), not only supplies but men may be landed at the base camp or even on the North Col. It is interesting to speculate whether the incentive to climb Everest would disappear if men had previously landed on the summit by helicopter. In the days to come mountain casuists will no longer argue about the legitimacy of using oxygen but about the precise point on Everest on which one could land by helicopter and yet claim to have climbed the mountain.

George Mallory is the true hero of Mr. Ullman's book, but Mr. Ullman's statement that Mallory was "a writer of high professional achievement" raises expectations which will be disappointed. His personal charm, physical beauty, splendid achievement and tragic death have blunted the critical powers of other mountaineers besides Mr. Ullman. R. L. G. Irving also quotes in his anthology the passage quoted by Mr. Ullman on page 281 of this book, a passage which no competent sub-editor would pass

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LIONEL HALE in *The Observer*

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THE BODLEY HEAD

in its present boggy form. Mr. Ullman quotes Mallory's answer to the question, "Why do you want to climb Everest?"—"Because it is there." He describes this reply, which is an evasion rather than an answer, as "the best as it is the briefest of answers." Brief, certainly, but "because there is a 'b' in both" would be equally adequate as a reply to that question.

There is, however, some very good writing in this book. Odell's account of his prolonged search for Mallory and Irvine is impressive in the modesty with which he envisaged the tremendous effort involved; and the narratives of E. F. Norton and Frank Smythe, both of whom reached on different expeditions, approximately the same height record on Everest, are notable contributions to the literature of mountaineering. Norton's narrative is effective as an unadorned account of a heroic struggle against the exhaustion which is the consequence of lack of oxygen. Smythe's story is in a different *genre*. Smythe is more interested in his personal reactions to Everest than in the technical details of the ascent.

An interesting chapter in the book describes two successful flights over Everest. No doubt copyright difficulties explain the sad omission from this book of any photographs taken on these flights. The alleged facsimile of Mallory's last note is reproduced from the *Alpine Journal*, in which "bloody load" had been altered to "beastly load." The Alpine Club was indeed the last English institution to retain an attractive flavour of that Victorian age.

My principal criticism of M. Gos's book, *Alpine Tragedy*, is that it is difficult for the reader to decide where M. Gos is reporting what happened, and where he is only using imagination. There is, for instance, an imaginary reconstruction of what was said shortly before an accident on the Jungfrau which left no survivors to report what had been said. Incidentally, Owen Glynne Jones, whose writing suggests that he was principally interested in mountains as technical problems, was quite incapable of remarking, "See how beautiful it is, this fatal arete, what terrible power sleeps in its devasted walls."

This intrusion of fiction is the more to be regretted because M. Gos has collected a great deal of valuable information, some of it previously unpublished, about the series of famous Alpine tragedies which are the theme of his book. The least satisfactory chapter is that which describes the accident which marred the first ascent of the Matterhorn. A mere re-hash of this oft-told tale is of no interest to mountaineers, but the time has certainly come for reconsideration of the evidence. Whymper was a magnificent mountaineer, and a superb interpreter of Alpine adventure. He was also a great showman, unhampered by a scrupulous regard for what Clough called "the mere 'it was.'" Even Mr. Frank Smythe, his biographer, admits that he was not at his best in his dealings with guides. His relations with guides had more in common with that of a Victorian factory owner with his employees than of a feudal chieftain with his retainers.

During the descent of the Matterhorn the rope broke between Taugwalder and Hadow. Hadow, Hudson and Croz fell to their death. In the case of a slip on rocks either the fall is instantly checked by those who do not fall, or the rope breaks, or the entire party are dragged to their death. This is decided in a matter of two or three seconds, far too short an interval to extract a knife and cut a rope. "No guide," writes M. Gos romantically, "in order to save his own life severs the rope which ties him to his traveller; he dies with him." He has no option, unless he can check the fall, or unless the rope breaks; there is no question here of heroics but only of dynamics.

I have been assured by the older inhabitants of Zermatt that nobody in the valley ever believed that Taugwalder cut the rope, and that it is equally absurd to suggest, as Whymper suggests, that he emigrated to America as the result of an unjust stricture. He emigrated at a time when many inhabitants of the valley decided to seek their fortune overseas. Whymper made a great parade of defending Taugwalder from an accusation which no intelligent mountaineer would ever have made, and then proceeded to insinuate that the weak rope between Taugwalder and Hadow had been deliberately placed there by Taugwalder in anticipation of a fall. To this insinuation it is sufficient to reply that Whymper and Hudson were in joint command of the party.

The translation by Malcolm Barnes is adequate, but English mountaineers never use the ugly word "Alpinist."

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EMBLEMS

English Emblem Books. By ROSEMARY FREEMAN. *Chatto & Windus.* 21s.

Occasionally even now one may see, among a scatter of initials carved or chalked on some tempting surface, two hearts skewered on an arrow. But in general everyone agrees that except for the rare backslidings of our poets and painters, whose calling condemns them to be old-fashioned, we are now for the first time in the history of our civilisation almost entirely free from symbolism.

Miss Freeman's subject has drawn her to the age of transition when the mediaeval habits of mind that had accepted the material world as no more than a symbol of spiritual truth were giving way before the new criticism. Already "allegory had become an interest for its own sake instead of a way of penetrating the universe." Emblem books, a fashion introduced from the continent in Elizabethan times, relied upon the duality of the symbol and its hidden significance, but used it with an intellectual self-consciousness. In method their essential characteristic was the complete interdependence of picture and text. The engravings were to be read, the verses visualised.

Nothing is more difficult to think about critically than the processes underlying critical thought—perception and the formation of images. Miss Freeman does not perfectly succeed in distinguishing all the elusive ideas lurking below the surface of her theme, partly because her text is muddied by a habit of minor repetition and discursiveness. The compilers of emblem books were evidently themselves much confused and brought together a variety of forms that cannot be justified on any purely logical basis. They ranged from heraldic signs and badges with no second meaning, through devices of crude significance and simple symbols such as Pelican or Lily, to complex forms including elaborately furnished personifications and scenes taken from mediaeval or classical allegories.

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Finally they extended as far as illustrations to stories that once more are without any inherent double meaning even though the tales they illustrate may be of the moralising kind.

It would seem that the two extreme ends of this rough catalogue do not properly fall within the emblem class, and it might have been helpful if Miss Freeman had established some such system and applied it as firmly as possible to the mass of material collected by Whitney, Wither, Quarles, Hawkins and the other more or less skilful authors of emblem books. Instead she defines the limits of her study only by stating at the outset that it does *not* include works of the type of Lord Shaftesbury's *Second Characters or the Language of Forms*. It is true that Lord Shaftesbury, writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century when the emblem convention was already ridiculed, took pains to dissociate himself from the "magical, mystical, monkish and Gothic" notions of his predecessors. Instead he put forward pictures that were historical in their mode and intended to convey their meaning by pose, expression and movement without the use of artificial symbols. Nevertheless, in one of his pictures, where Hercules is making his choice between Vice and Virtue, the sterner goddess is allowed a bridle and helmet as symbols of her forbearance and fortitude even though they lie negligently at her feet. This symbolist paraphernalia is excused by the plea that a bridle and helmet "are really portable instruments such as the martial dame who represents Virtue may well be supposed to have brought with her." Vice, it is true, being more easily recognizable, can rely on attitude, expression and decolletage, yet it is arguable that Lord Shaftesbury's concessions to the difficult attributes of Virtue place *Second Characters* legitimately within the limits of the emblem convention. At least they appear to have a better claim than the simple illustrations to fables that the early compilers included and Miss Freeman does not question.

Shaftesbury's work, and particularly his comment on the methods of the past, throws light on the changes that took place in emblem books during the passage of the seventeenth century. In the earlier books the emblem was general and public in its intention, "a sweet moral symbol" so static and complete in itself that it could be turned to decorative use in wall paintings, tapestries and embroidery. A different conception that had been maturing on the continent was introduced into England when Quarles published his *Emblemes* in 1635. This book contains a series of engravings and verses of some merit describing the adventures of Anima, a maiden personifying the human soul, in pursuit of the Cupid, Amor, who represents divine love. In spite of the complexity of the associated symbols, the reliance of these scenes on emotion and action gives them a literary quality quite incompatible with the old decorative values. The encroachment of Renaissance modes in Quarle's *Emblemes* is also shown in their individualism; they "represent the individual experience of the human soul . . . and their significance is psychological." From that point it is easy to see how, as humanism grew, the "mystical and monkish" element waned until the whole emblem convention was killed by Augustan mirth.

Miss Freeman does not fail to give full attention to the relationship between her emblem books and contemporary literature, particularly poetry. Though both are interesting, the difficulty here is to distinguish direct influence from similarities due only to the use of common sources and conventions. It seems that while Spenser did both use and influence emblem books, George Herbert alone was able to incorporate emblems in his own poetic imagery and so avail himself of all their precious train of associations. This he contrived to do not only with single images, but by giving whole poems emblematic forms that were explicitly stated only in their titles. This subtle poetic achievement, best known from *The Pulley* and *The Collar*, makes an interesting comparison with his purely formal trick of printing poems in the shape of emblems as he did in *The Altar* and *Easter Wings*.

In the mind of Bunyan the allegorical habit outlasted its day, and Pilgrim's Progress was, as Miss Freeman comments "an anachronism before it was born." Meanwhile by his publication in 1686 of *A Book for Boys and Girls*, later to be known as *Divine Emblems*, he was the first to divert the dying tradition for adult emblem books into the juvenile form in which it was to survive, and even to prosper, in the moral atmosphere of Victorian nurseries.

It is impossible to recommend *English Emblem Books* for easy consecutive reading, but it should be bought as a source book for a little-known and significant subject. Some of its ideas are, indeed, hardly expressible in words, but taken together with its plentiful pictures and quotations it can give an insight into seventeenth-century experience of a kind not to be had from the most eloquent intellectual argument.

JACQUETTA HAWKES

INDIAN CHILDREN

And Gazelles Leaping. By SUDHIN N. GHOSE *Michael Joseph.* 12s. 6d.

Before she died a hundred years or so ago a certain lady of Calcutta known as Rani Nilmani made an unusual will: that her beautiful estate on the outskirts of the city should be handed over to the Government on the condition that it was never built over or fenced off. The result has been that in the midst of sprawling, suburban Calcutta there still exists an old village where buffaloes wallow in the waterways, children play in the green fields, and peacocks, monkeys and parrots live unmolested in a huge walled orchard. It is in this village that Sister Svenska, a Swede, has her school. It is a remarkable school, because, quite clearly, Sister Svenska is a remarkable woman. The children, whose ages range from two to ten, are Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Jews, Jains, Parsees and Buddhists, but they are all united in one sentiment: that school is a very happy place indeed, much happier than their own homes where the parents seem to be quite remarkably unkind.

This book, *And Gazelles Leaping*, is the autobiography of one of these children, and it is delightful. The narrative is lit up with the same sensibility, feminine rather than masculine, humorous and sad by turn, that we find in the stories of Narayan. Here is the postman, Peon-Dada, discussing the proper care of pet tigers with a young man who rides one to school every day —though a less bemused observer would have called it a tricycle. The wheelwright, Cha-Cha, is also a man of understanding; he smokes his hookah when he is in a good humour, caresses his beard when he is in a better humour and, when he is in the very best humour of all, he actually combs it. At such times he will tell the boy with the tricycle, "He seems to be growing fast. If he grows at this rate you will soon need a ladder to climb on his back." Other school pets include a duck, a goat, a donkey, a cat, some white mice and, above all, Mohan the pigmy elephant. Upon Mohan the author has, with the grave fun of childhood, conferred a preternatural understanding and sensibility; or was the excessive shyness of his younger days indeed due to the rudeness of his neighbours, the ill-bred, coarse-mannered elephants of Professor Madhukar Babaji's Circus?

With the same lightness Sudhin Ghose touches on the more sombre side of his childhood. In Sister Svenska's school there was, it seems, the same tradition of "not squealing" as at Dr.

George Bettany

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WINGATE

Arnold's Rugby. The difference is that these Indian children and the author in particular have more to squeal about. He is victimised by a gang of ruffians from Calcutta. They propose blinding and maiming Mohan the elephant and transforming young Ghose into the oriental equivalent of a gangster's moll, but he proves so stubborn that they merely succeed in half killing him. There is no doubt that, later, they would have killed him but for his courage, the courage of a cornered animal, when seemingly at their mercy. Another bloody episode in the book deals with a communal riot in the city, when the dead and injured are carried into the village under the eyes of the bewildered children. Yet the book has such style that these passages of brutality are all of a piece with the warm-hearted gaiety of the other pages. It is a reminder, of course, of the emotional maturity of the oriental. Where we might be betrayed by anger or dismay, the Indian is content to say far less about what he assumes to be the common lot of mankind. He does not strike dramatic attitudes, and he is remarkably free from self-pity—with the result that in this book, for example, the appeal for our sympathy is direct and irresistible. The publisher has also played his part; the book is beautifully produced, we are given the music for some of the songs the children sang, and the illustrations are a pleasure to look at.

P. H. NEWBY

BEN NICHOLSON

Ben Nicholson. Paintings, Reliefs, Drawings. With an introduction by HERBERT READ. *Lund Humphries.* 63*s.*

Every now and again we have in England an artist or a poet who cares nothing for our standard mixture of moralisation and the romantic. We have an artist or a poet who says, "This or that appears to me momentously delightful;" and who goes on and on without argument or without saying much else.

Ben Nicholson is a painter of that kind; and I suspect William Barnes (at first, how unlikely a conjunction!) to have been a poet of that kind a hundred years ago. Barnes liked the placing of pure colour against colour and the solution of the geometric problems of form and melody; an abstract, rather inhuman poet, so innocent that he could never have been popular, even had he written always in plain English. The language of Nicholson's painting is plain, but neither English nor foreign. It is Nicholson-language; and in his introduction to these 200 or so plates, or examples of its use, I wish Herbert Read had more celebrated the vocabulary, and the grammar, and the syntax.

Fifty years ago writers about an artist inclined to be too trivially intimate; as now they incline to be too importantly remote. This remoteness could be corrected. I do not mean that Herbert Read should write like Alice Meynell on Holman Hunt. Mrs. Meynell described the drawing-room, the dining-room, the boudoir (and also the studio) of the house in Fulham; and for her instruction Holman Hunt knelt down on the lawn dressed up (even to the gun) in that costume in which he had painted *The Scapegoat*, forty years earlier, on the chemical shores of the Dead Sea. We smile at the photograph. In half a century others will smile at the remote defence of the type of painting with which books such as these must be prefaced.

Worringer, Lipps, Riegl, Henri Focillon, T. E. Hulme, even Heidegger; art from aboriginal art to Wu Chen and Severini—here they all are, all doing their bit for this abstract painter. But since we only know of Ben Nicholson's painting (whether he represents playing cards on a brown and grey cloth, carves and paints a relief, or draws a Cornish landscape of sea and mine chimneys) through the senses, wouldn't it be as well to explain it through the senses? Not exclusively, but additionally or mainly?

I do not wish to be ungenerous to Herbert Read, who has uniquely and uncorruptedly and without compromise fulfilled the intellectual's part for so many years, but I do not think that a monograph of the life's work of an abstract painter need, any longer, begin with defence by way of "some account of the historical origins" of abstraction. Writers upon art must be able to say what they are liking, and why they are liking it, in words as direct as the pigments used by the painter. The proper introduction to Ben Nicholson—would it not certainly establish his degree of relation and indebtedness to Braque, Miró, Mondrian, etc., but then, pull devil, pull baker, find the phrases apt for Nicholson's remarkable individuality? This would demand in the critic a parallel responsiveness to colours in juxtaposition, and tones of colour, and to coloured objects of the kind that Nicholson has so enjoyed and has so often used as elements in his painting—from pencils like barber's poles, fireworks, playing cards, fishing floats, flags, jugs, stripes, fields, snatches of sea, to Miró's décor for *Jeux d'enfants*. And could one not somehow reach to Nicholson's peculiarity and his achievement by positive and negative comparison to Kandinsky or Klee or Miró (or Benozzo Gozzoli), and to music by Bizet or Liadoff—reach at last to that cold innocence, which is not "romantic"—the savouring of which is, in fact,

> To savour the small inverted cones of white
> Ice cream surely consumed in Paradise?

For me Ben Nicholson has best defined his own work in a piece of his excellent writing about another artist—a piece not in this book, but quoted by Mr. John Summerson in the pamphlet in the series of Penguin Modern Painters. He had visited Piet Mondrian's studio in the noise of the Gare Montparnasse, had gone up what I remember (having been there later on Nicholson's advice) as a bare and squalid staircase into a squalid room, in which Mondrian lived black-trousered and not always well-shaven among his squared-off colours. He came away and sat at a café "almost touching all the traffic going in and out of the Gare Montparnasse," feeling full of quiet and repose, and remembering the light in Mondrian's room and the pauses and silences in his talk.

> The feeling in his studio [he goes on] must have been not unlike the feeling in one of those hermit's caves where lions used to go to have thorns taken out of their paws.

Nicholson's best work gives such a clarity and cessation of personal irritations and pains, as of a childhood unworried by religion, metaphysics, or sex, or death, or money. The feeling was to the lion, even to the lion's paw, remember; not to the hermit.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

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A Rationalist Encyclopedia. By JOSEPH MCCABE. *Watts.* 21*s.*

It is always unwise to protest too much, especially in the ideological department where aggressive conviction is so often a symptom of incomplete conversion. We all know the stages. Militant Atheist at fifteen: "Mummy, I no longer retain any vestige of belief in God and refuse to go through with the mockery of confirmation, so will you please tell Daddy to write to my housemaster." Anglo-Catholic at nineteen: "But it's all so deliciously true, Father Pemberton, I can feel it here, and here." Communist at twenty-four: "Without my Party Card I should lose all significance. I should have ceased to be an active agent in the historical process." Trotskyist at thirty: "A spectre is haunting Stalin, the spectre of Communism." Logical Positivist at thirty-

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five: "Unless one can distinguish between a value judgment and a verifiable proposition one might as well give up thought altogether." Finally, at fifty, on a postcard from foreign parts: "The swami says I can expect samadhi any day now."

The eighty-one-year-old compiler of this Encyclopaedia has apparently undergone only one conversion, or at most two. As a young man he became a monk of the Franciscan Order, and, as "Father Antony," was professor of philosophy and ecclesiastical history. He left the Church in 1897, became one of the original founders of the Rationalist Press Association, has written two hundred books, delivered two thousand lectures, and proclaims himself an atheist and materialist. An oaken pillar of English rationalism, in fact, pertaining to the middle class, libertarian, anti-clerical tradition that had its origin in the French Revolution. It is a tradition of the highest, the very loftiest moral and ethical principles. No amount of tact on the part of the Company Sergeant Major can ever persuade its adherents to let themselves be written down as "C. of E."

The Encyclopaedia (incidentally it is excellent value: 633 pages of readable double column comprising 1,800 separate entries, packed with information, most of it accurate) is designed principally to give information on the Rationalist-religious controversy to "rationalists who have not access to large libraries and may wish to engage in local controversy." Catholics, as might be expected, are ex-Father Antony's pet target, Papal History is his speciality. He never misses. Under an entry "Rule of the Whores, the," he thunders along for four columns with copious extracts from Liutprand on the licentiousness of the *scortae* who dominated the Papal Court from 900 to 964. "More recent histories," he concludes, "give a totally false impression by suppressing the worst facts and concealing the extraordinary length of the period of corruption." On he darts through the alphabet to castigate Ruskin, John ("never a strong man who felt throughout life the influence of a deeply Christian mother and a father who, though a London wine-merchant, had an enthusiasm for art") for wavering from his habitual agnosticism, and to congratulate Bertrand Russell for "being one of the very few men to describe himself as an agnostic in *Who's Who*." Nesting together, meanwhile, amongst the A's are Alma Tadema—"he was an agnostic (information from his personal friends)"—and Allenby, Field-Marshal, who, unlike many retired soldiers, joined the R.P.A. and in his Edinburgh Rectorial Address—"one of the noblest appeals for peace and progress ever made by a soldier—pointedly excluded Religion and the Churches from his enumeration of the agencies of betterment."

It is a swingeing, polemical work, written in true flail-like style. But, in the process of thrashing superstition and cruelty and obscurantism and all the attributes of unreason, and controverting the supposition that morality is a Christian monopoly, it sometimes strays a little from the narrow path of objectivity. The article on "Prostitution in Christian Times," complete with references to the *Liber Gomorrhiacus* and Ordericus Vitalis' *Norman History*, sets out to refute the suggestion that "prostitution, vice and especially perversion, was less in Christian than in Pagan times." The thesis is vigorously presented, but one does rather raise an eyebrow at the statement that "in Greek and Roman days there was no general looseness among wives and ordinary women." And in the entry about Abraham, a name the compiler can scarcely bring himself to indite, "it is a matter of indifference to rationalists," he writes, "whether there is some sort of tribal tradition preserved in the Abraham stories in Genesis." He goes on to rebuke Sir Leonard Wooley for having lent his support to the suggestion that this obviously fictitious figment ever existed, and archaeologists in general for giving "joy to bibliolaters." The Goddess of Reason—whom he has been at pains to defend against the false accusation of having been represented by a French whore—would, one feels, scarcely approve.

In the numerous scientific and philosophical entries he is generally on sure ground and does some useful work exploding the suggestion that modern scientific findings lend direct support to idealism and mysticism. It is typical of him, however, that he should refuse to differentiate between mechanism and materialism.

MAURICE RICHARDSON

TRADE UNIONS

The Early English Trade Unions. Documents from the Home Office Papers in the Public Record Office. By A. ASPINALL. *Batchworth Press.* 30*s.*

From 1799-1824 Trade Unionism in England was entirely prohibited by statute law. This was not wholly new, for during the eighteenth century there had been many laws on the Statute Book forbidding combination in particular trades and the judges had commonly taken the view that Trade Unions, apart from any statute, were to be regarded at common law as "criminal conspiracies in restraint of trade." The Acts of 1799 and 1880 were, indeed, meant not so much to create a new offence as to provide easier and more summary means of enforcing a prohibition that was deemed already to exist. Neither the eighteenth-century laws nor the new legislation passed in the heat of the anti-Jacobin excitement at the end of the eighteenth century succeeded in suppressing Trade Unionism, though the Home Office was continually inciting both magistrates and employers to take action under the new laws in order to stamp the movement out. In this volume Professor Aspinall, following in the footsteps of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, has made a most interesting series of extracts from the Home Office papers during the period when the Combination Laws were in force. Readers of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's books will be able to follow in further detail the story with which these writers have already made them familiar, and will be able to form their own judgment on Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's conclusions. We find here Lord Sidmouth and other Home Office dignitaries on the one hand professing their desire that the Government and the local magistrates should stand aside from disputes about wages and conditions between employers and workers, but, on the other hand, steadily urging the suppression of all forms of working-class combination and ready to seize on the smallest hint that Radical agitators were behind any movement for improved conditions. Some of the most interesting of Professor Aspinall's extracts deal with the sailors and keelmen of the North-East Coast, where combinations were particularly active; and others throw some further light on the attempt made in 1818 to create a Philanthropic Society, sometimes known as the "Philanthropic Hercules," which was intended to be a general union of the workers in all trades and industries. Professor Aspinall provides a short introduction to the extracts and a number of notes, particularly about the persons referred to.

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